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A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

BY F. P. A.

I wish you a merry Christmas,
My friends and neighbors all,
Good store of cheer throughout the year
In cabin, cot, or hall.
May plenty crown your wishes,
May Peace her mantle fling,
That each may be 'neath his roof-tree
As happy as a king.

I wish you a merry Christmas—
Not one, but o'er and o'er,—
And at your gate if misery wait,
Throw open wide the door.
Heap high the blazing Yule-log,
The festive table spread;
Let all whose need is great indeed
Partake your daily bread.

I wish you a merry Christmas,
A happy New Year, too;
With vigorous heart to bear a part
In all you find to do.
So may your roof-tree flourish,
Blest be your honest toil,
And year by year may Fortune cheer
Our people and our soil.

HEART AND RING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NULL AND VOID," "MADAM'S WARD," "THE HOUSE IN THE CLOSE," "WHITE BERRIES AND RED," "ONLY ONE LOVE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVI.

"SPENSER CHURCHILL!" exclaimed Jeffrey hoarsely, his hands closing with a gesture at once threatening and repressive.

"My dear Mr. Flint!" purred Spenser, his head on one side, his hand extended benignantly. "My dear Mr. Flint! What a delightful coincidence! After all, nothing is more true than the rather too hackneyed assertion that the world is a small place."

Jeffrey glanced at him fiercely, waved his hand.

"Pass on—pass on!" he panted; "I—I will have nothing to say to you!"

"Now really, my dear Jeffrey!" murmured Spenser Churchill remonstratingly, "is it—I put it to you as a sensible man—is it really worth while to nourish these—er—unchristianlike resentments? Look at me——" It was quite an unnecessary request, for the fierce, deeply-sunken eyes had never left the smooth, supple face. "Look at me, my dear Jeffrey. I, too, have had my trials; but—er—I sink them, I let them drop,—I bury them, and I make it my principle to forget and forgive."

"Let me pass, you——!" panted Jeffrey, his whole frame shaking with an effort at self-control.

"To forget and forgive," repeated the other, as if the words were a sweet morsel he was turning over his tongue. "Believe me, dear Jeffrey, that is far, far the wiser plan."

"You think so?" said Jeffrey hoarsely. "You can forget, Spenser Churchill; I cannot, for it was you who wronged, I who suffered! So you have forgotten, and you dared to think that I had done so? That you may see how well I remember, villain—— No, stop!" for Spenser Churchill had backed a few steps, and glanced round, as if meditating a retreat.

"Stop, Spenser Churchill, while I remind you why, when the devil sends you across my path, that it would be wiser for you to crawl on one side, lest I crush you, you smiling, fawning reptile! Look on me and remember! I was young, rich in health and hope, blessed with the love of a honest, tender-hearted girl, when that devil,—your master,—the Marquis of Stoyle, the beast for whom you jackalled, employed you to entice her from me. You succeeded, Spenser Churchill, and have forgotten her misery, and mine; all, save perhaps the sum your master flung you!"

His hands were so near the delicate white throat opposite him, that Spenser Churchill drew his head back sharply, and turned pale.

"My dear Jeffrey!" he murmured soothingly. "Now, come, come. Now, really you know! If anyone were listening,—which I am thankful, for your sake, is not the case,—gather from your—er—really extravagant language (not I had, like the bad man in a play, contrived the ruin of the usual virtuous young lady, whereas I must in justice to myself, remind you, my dear Jeffrey, that the young lady in question was only guilty of the remarkably bad taste of jilting you for the Marquis of Stoyle, who, like an honorable gentleman, made her his lawful wife and sharer of his exalted rank."

"Yes," said Jeffrey hoarsely. "Because, by no other means could he get her in his power! Made her his wife! Yes, that he might crush her the more easily! Enough, Spenser Churchill!"

"Pardon me! One word more! You appear to have forgotten that the lady, marvelous as she was, preferred to return to her first admirer—— There, there!" he broke off, putting up his hand to ward off the threatened blow; "as you say, it is not worth talking about, and, as I say, it is much wiser to forget. The poor lady is dead, and the child——"

"Is dead, too!" said Jeffrey.

—"is playing 'Juliet' at the Theatre Royal, Barton," put in Spenser Churchill smoothly. "Miss Doris Marlowe, otherwise Lady Mary, daughter of the Most Honorable the Marquis of Stoyle——"

Jeffrey staggered, and sank trembling on a fallen tree, great drops of sweat trickling down his white, wrinkled face.

Spenser Churchill took out a cigarette and lit it, smiling blandly down on the stricken figure.

"Upon my word, my dear Jeffrey," he said pleasantly, "I am almost inclined to cry, 'Fie, for shame!' and to retort one of the ugly words which you so liberally applied to me. To afford shelter to the wife of the dear marquis is one thing, but to steal his child——"

"She—she died!" gasped Jeffrey hoarsely.

"So it was stated, and so it was believed by all excepting the gentlemen who has the honor to stand before you."

He laughed unctuously. "I had my suspicions from the first, and I found them justified when I saw Miss Doris Marlowe in her charming performance the other evening, and, on inquiry, found that she was the daughter of Mr. Jeffrey Flint!"

Jeffrey wiped the sweat from his forehead and opened his lips, but he seemed deprived of the power of speech.

"You must permit me," continued the softly mocking voice, "to congratulate you upon the result of your excellent training. The young lady is a most talented actress—most charming! But, my dear Jeffrey, does it not occur to you sometimes that it is, to use the vulgar slang of the day, rather rough upon her? To deprive a young and helpless girl of her rank and position——"

Jeffrey extended his trembling hands entreatingly.

"Stop—stop!" he panted. "I—I did it for the best—I did it for her good——"

Spenser Churchill laughed mockingly.

"Yes!" cried Jeffrey, rising with sudden despair. "For her good! You saw her—you saw how happy, how innocent she is! All her life has been happy and free from care. What would it have been if I had yielded her back to the man who broke her mother's heart, the man who would have hated her for that mother's sake? Man, man, don't torture me with your devilish smile! I did it for the best!"

Spenser Churchill laughed again.

"Dear, dear!" he murmured, "how dreadfully easy it is to deceive oneself! Now, here are you, a most excellent man, I have no doubt, my dear Jeffrey, actually persuading yourself that in robbing another man of his only child and depriving her of her rights, you have been committing a noble and virtuous action! Now I am sorry to say that I don't agree with you! I've no doubt you have become attached to the girl——"

Jeffrey put up his hand.

"Silence!" he said hoarsely. "It is not for such as you to understand the love I bear her—my child, my child!"

"Pardon me, the Marquis of Stoyle's child!" said the sneering voice.

Jeffrey raised his hand and confronted the smiling, mocking face.

"Enough. You know my secret, and you alone——"

"Are you sure of that?" said Spenser Churchill smoothly. "Are you sure that no one else shares it?"

Jeffrey made a gesture of assent.

"No one else. Not even she. To-day I had resolved to tell her.

A flash came into the watchful eyes.

"To-day—ah, yes!"

"Yes," said Jeffrey, with a deep sigh that was almost a groan, "I have brought myself to it at last, after such a struggle as you cannot understand. To-day she was to be told, was to take her future into her own hands; to choose—" his voice broke—"between one who has loved her like a father, and the man who drove her mother from his house and broke her heart!"

"Hem—yes!" murmured Spenser Churchill: "and you flatter yourself she will remain with you, of course?"

"You do not know her," was the tremulous reply. "You do not know her! My child, my child!"

Spenser Churchill watched him in silence under his white, smooth lids.

"By the way, my dear Jeffrey," he said softly, "did it ever strike you, that supposing Lady Mary decided to return to her father,"—Jeffrey winced,—"her father,—that the marquis might refuse to acknowledge her?"

Jeffrey looked at him as if he scarcely understood.

"You see," continued Spenser Churchill, resting his foot on the tree, and leaning forward with a subtle smile; "it is such an extraordinary story; the marquis might be inclined to remark that he would require some proofs! I need scarcely remind you that he is not the most credulous of men; in fact, that he is rather inclined to be suspicious."

Jeffrey nodded grimly.

"I know him," he said, almost as to himself. "I have thought of that, and am prepared with proofs." He put his hand to his breast pocket mechanically, and drew out the papers, and Spenser Churchill's eyes darted to them with a swift eagerness.

"If—if Doris chooses to—to go to him, and leave me, it will not be in his power to repudiate her! These," and he touched the papers with his forefinger, and then put them in his pocket again; "these will establish her birth beyond dispute."

"I am delighted to hear it. That is quite satisfactory, quite. And so, my dear Jeffrey, you expect the young lady to renounce her father, the marquis,—her rank and title, and all that would become hers—think of it!—and remain with you, all will go on as before, and the father and his adopted child will be happy ever afterwards, like the people in the fairy story?"

Jeffrey nodded, and the deep lines in his face grew lighter.

"Yes," he said in a low voice again, as if he were communing with himself rather than answering the other man's question: "yes, we shall take up our lives as before, my child, my Doris and I! She will be my Doris still, mine to love, and guard, and watch over! You saw her—" he went on with suppressed eagerness.

"There was truth in what you said, though you meant it insultingly: she will be a great actress—great! And it is I who have taught her!—I, who loved her mother! You taunted me Spenser Churchill, with selfish aims in keeping from her the knowledge of her birth. It was unjust. 'Hide my child from him always,—always, Jeffrey!' she said. They were her last words. Poor Lucy!"

His head drooped, and he covered his eyes with his thin, gaunt hands for a moment; then, as if remembering the presence of the other man, turned to him.

"You are here still? Why are you waiting? Go your way, and let me go mine. You know my secret—it is no concern of yours. Forget it, as you forget the wrong you did me. Go!" and he pointed down the path.

Spenser Churchill smiled blandly.

"My dear Jeffrey doesn't it occur to you that perhaps this little secret of yours does concern me?"

The haggard eyes were raised to the smooth, mocking face.

"Doesn't it occur to you that, though you don't appear to have any conscience to speak of, that I may not be so hardened. Oh, fie, Jeffrey! You know, you really must know, what it is my duty to do!"

"Your duty?" repeated Jeffrey, in a low voice. "What do you mean?"

"Why, my dear sir, of course it is my duty to go to the marquis, and inform him of the existence of his child. Oh! and how sweet a duty," he murmured, "to restore a long lost child to its father's loving arms!"

Jeffrey sprang to his feet, and stood, breathing hard, his hand clenched tightly at his side.

Spenser Churchill looked at him with an air of gentle reproach.

"I cannot think how it is you haven't seen that from the first, dear Jeffrey. You may be so lost to all sense of right as to conceal the fact of Lady Mary's existence, but I—oh, my dear Jeffrey—I am a man of honor and must act as my conscience dictates. And how great a reward will be mine! To restore to a father the child he has mourned as dead! The dear marquis, I can picture his delight—" the smile grew sardonic for a moment, "his delight at recovering her, and his gratitude to you——"

Jeffrey drew nearer.

"You—you will do this?" he panted almost inaudibly.

"Yes," said Spenser Churchill, then with a rapid change of voice, and laying his hand on the quivering shoulder of the man he was torturing, he added, "unless you come to my terms, my dear Jeffrey."

"Your terms?" echoed Jeffrey, his face working, his hands clasping and unclasping each other.

Spenser Churchill nodded blandly.

"Y—es. I take an interest in this charming young lady; I knew her mother, you see——"

"Reward!" broke from Jeffrey's parched lips. "Don't—don't try me too hard!"

"And I should like to have a hand in restoring her to her proper place, or permitting her to remain under your care."

"You mean that her fate is to be in your hands?"

"Yes, exactly; and that it may do so

most completely and satisfactorily, I think I will take charge of those interesting papers which you referred to, my dear Jeffrey."

Jeffrey's hand flew to his breast.

"The papers!" he articulated hoarsely.

Spenser Churchill nodded.

"Yes. Don't say you will not, my dear fellow, because if you do you will compel me to go straight to the marquis—who is at Barton Towers, by the way——"

"Barton Towers—the marquis—Doris!" muttered Jeffrey wildly and with a vacant stare.

"Yes, Doris, who will not be your Doris any longer, but will have to remain with her father, the marquis, whether she likes it or not——"

He had gone too far. With a spring, the tortured man was upon him, the long, thin fingers fastened tightly in the soft, white throat, the gaunt face was close upon the smooth, false one.

Spenser Churchill reeled, and went down on one knee.

"Take your hands off!" he croaked suffocatingly, as he struggled to release himself; but Jeffrey, though the older man of the two, seemed possessed of the strength of an athlete, and, after a desperate struggle, Spenser Churchill lay on his back, with Jeffrey's knee on his chest, and Jeffrey's fingers still choking him.

"Are—are you going to murder me?" he managed to gasp out.

"I am going to kill you!" was the grim reply, a wild, fierce light burning in the hollow eyes. "One kills a snake, not murders it. I kill you as I would any other vermin!"

"Jeffrey—let me go! Let me go, and I swear to keep your secret. I swear—my honor——"

An awful smile lit up the face above him.

"Trust *her* happiness to your oath!" he said hoarsely. "Trust *her* to your honor!" the hands tightened, the sky grew black, the trees danced a mad carnival in Spenser Churchill's eyes, and they were closing for the last time, when suddenly the steel-like fingers relaxed their hold; Jeffrey reeled back, and, throwing up his arms, screamed—

"Doris, Doris!" and fell across the man who, only a moment ago, was at his mercy.

Dazed, sick with terror, and half suffocated, Spenser Churchill struggled to his feet and staggered to a tree. He leant against it for a moment or two, panting and gasping, tugging at the collar of his shirt, and regaining his breath, and at last he looked shudderingly at the still form upon the ground.

Still shuddering he went towards and knelt over it.

"Fainted!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Another moment!" a shiver ran over his sleek, white face. "Another moment and I should have been lying like that. The madman!"

He spurned the body with his foot.

"Lie there and cool yourself!" he snarled, and was turning away, when suddenly he started and put his hand to his brow.

"The beast has driven my senses out of me! The papers! Of course! Ha, ha, Master Jeffrey!" and, kneeling down again, he hurriedly turned the still figure over, and, unbuttoning the waistcoat, snatched out the papers.

As he did so, something—was it the nameless terror of death, to which mortal humanity is and ever will be thrall?—something made him wince and shrink back.

He stared for a moment or two at the white face, then, slowly, slowly, extended his hand and trembling, laid it over the heart. The next instant he started back, and, white as the face beneath him, cried—

"Great Heaven! He's dead!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"DORIS!" The cry rang through the wood and reached the spot where Doris lay full length upon the bank like a crushed flower. For a moment she thought it was an invention of her disordered mind, then she seemed to recognise Jeffrey's voice, and thrusting the letter in her bosom she sprang to her feet, and with hurried steps made her way, half blindly, in the direction of the sound.

A few moments brought her to the open glade, and with a cry of terror she was on her knees beside the still form.

She had never before been in the presence of death, and for a time she thought that he had only fainted, and she raised his head and called upon him in accents of alarm and affection; then suddenly she heard a step behind her, and looking round saw the smooth, bland face of the man who had stood up in the box at the theatre, the man against whom Jeffrey had warned her.

She shrank back and clasped the dead man closer to her as if to protect him.

"Has anything happened?" asked Spenser Churchill with tender concern. "Dear me, I am afraid there has been an accident; the gentleman is ill?"

"Yes, yes!" panted Doris. "Help me! oh, help me!"

Spenser Churchill knelt down and examined the stern face with an anxious regard.

"Why, I know him!" he said with an air of surprise. "It is Mr. Flint—Mr. Jeffrey Flint, is it not?"

Doris made a gesture of assent without removing her eyes from the old man's face.

"Yes. Is he—is he very ill?"

Spenser Churchill shook his head solemnly.

"I am afraid—how did it happen, Miss Marlowe? It is Miss Marlowe, is it not?"

"I do not know," sobbed Doris, heedless of the latter part of the question. "I—I was not here—I heard him call! Oh, Jeffrey, Jeffrey! dear Jeffrey! Is he—A doctor! oh, if I could get a doctor! Someone ——"

"My dear young lady!" murmured Spenser Churchill pityingly, "I am afraid —do not give way, bear up! In the midst of life——"

A cry rang through the wood, and a shudder shook her frame, then she looked up with a terrible calmness.

"You say that he is dead—is that it? Dead! Oh, Heaven, dead!"

Spenser Churchill shook his head.

"I fear—I very much fear—" he murmured gravely, and he laid his hand upon the thin wrist. "And you do not know how it happened?" he asked again, his eyes scrutinising her face with a quick keenness.

"No!" said Doris hoarsely, and with a sob. "He was alone—I was coming to meet him—I heard him call my name, and—and I found him like this! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Can you bear to be left alone, for a little while?" said Spenser Churchill. "There is a cottage near here, on the outskirts of the wood. I will go and get some assistance. The poor fellow has died from a sudden attack of heart disease!"

"Oh, go, go!" panted Doris.

He went, after another searching glance at her white face, and she bent over the motionless form, almost as lifeless herself.

In a few minutes Spenser Churchill returned with a couple of farm laborers carrying a hurdle, and the body was tenderly and reverently carried to the house, Doris walking beside it and still holding the cold, dead hand.

Hasty preparation had been made for the reception of the stricken man, and he was carried up to the best room. A messenger had been sent to Barton for the doctor, and in a short time he appeared and was received by Spenser Churchill who in sympathetic accents gave an account of the case. "Yes, yes! Ah, yes. I know something of him; he consulted me a few days ago."

Then he passed upstairs and into the room where the dead man lay upon the bed, with Doris kneeling beside him still holding his hand.

"My dear," said the doctor, after a short examination, "this is no place for you. No one can do anything for him: your friend has gone to his last rest," and he motioned to the woman of the cottage, who stood crying at the door.

Slowly, reluctantly, Doris permitted them to take her away, and the doctor after a few minutes went downstairs and rejoined Spenser Churchill.

"It is only too true, I see," said that gentleman sadly.

The doctor nodded gravely.

"Yes," he said; "he has been dead some time. It is very sad, very! That poor young creature—Miss Marlowe, I believe?"

Spenser Churchill nodded.

"It is a terrible blow for her, terrible! He was her guardian, I understand?"

Spenser Churchill nodded again.

"I believe so," he said.

"Poor girl, poor girl!" murmured the kind-hearted doctor, turning his face away. "So suddenly."

"My heart bleeds for her!" said Spenser Churchill, wiping away something that may have been a tear. "So young and friendless——"

"Friendless!" said the doctor.

"Well, I am given to understand she has no father or mother," he explained. "I should not have said friendless. I trust, I humbly trust that, seeing I was on the spot, sent, so to speak providentially, that she will permit me to be of some service to her, poor young thing."

He took out his cardcase and handed a card.

The doctor glanced at it and bowed.

"Oh, Mr. Spenser Churchill? Your name is known to me, sir, of course; and I feel that I am justified in saying that this poor girl will indeed have a friend in you, if you are the Mr. Spenser Churchill, the well-known philanthropist."

Spenser Churchill cast down his eyes and sighed.

"I have no claim to so high a title, doctor," he said meekly, "though I trust I may say that I take a humble interest in any good work. Poor girl, poor girl! I fear there will have to be an inquest? That will be a terrible trial for her!" and he shot a glance under his lids at the doctor's thoughtful face.

"Well—" he replied hesitatingly, "I don't know. I—I really think it may be avoided."

"If it is not quite necessary," said Spenser Churchill softly. "It is a trying ordeal for the survivor at any time, but with this poor child so young and sensitive——"

"Yes, yes," assented the doctor. "I do not think it will be necessary. Mr. Flint consulted me the day before yesterday, and I warned him then that he must be careful to avoid all excitement; indeed I told him as plainly as I dared that any sudden shock would be fatal."

"Dear me! Poor fellow!" murmured Spenser Churchill.

"And I think, under the circumstances, that I can give a certificate, and so avoid an inquest."

Spenser Churchill heaved a soft sigh of relief.

"I shall be glad if you will tell me all you know respecting the case, Mr. Churchill?"

"Certainly," assented Spenser Churchill, with a sigh. "It is soon told. I was strolling through the woods in the direction of the town—I had left the Towers half-an-hour previously—when I heard a girl's voice — poor Miss Marlowe's, — crying piteously. I hurried up, and found her kneeling beside him. That is all, excepting that I am quite sure he was dead when I reached the spot, and I think he had been dead some time."

The doctor nodded.

"And you met no one, saw no one excepting Miss Marlowe?"

"No, no one; I heard and saw nothing but what I have told you," replied Spenser Churchill quietly.

"Hem! I don't quite see. It would appear as if there had been a shock——"

"Is that absolutely necessary?" suggested Spenser Churchill softly. "In heart disease, death may result—I speak with deference—without any shock or excitement."

"Oh, quite so, quite so," assented the doctor. "The deceased might have died at any moment—in his bed, or during his ordinary avocations. Oh, yes."

"I am relieved to hear you say that," said Spenser Churchill. "I am so anxious, on Miss Marlowe's account, to avoid an inquest."

"Quite so, quite so. There will be no necessity. Did you know the deceased?"

"I knew something of him some years ago," replied Spenser Churchill; "but we have not met for a long period; indeed, it must be ten or fifteen years. I only knew him quite slightly, and had not seen him of late, even at a distance. It was quite a shock to me, recognizing him lying there on the grass, dead!"

"I daresay," said the doctor, quite sympathetically. "And now, what is to be done?—I mean, with reference to this poor young girl."

"If you will leave it to me," murmured Spenser Churchill meekly, "I will do all that lies in my power. She may have relations and friends. I will ascertain from her, and communicate with them. You may trust me to do all that I can to soften the terrible blow for the poor young creature."

The doctor took his hand and wrung it.

"You are a good man, Mr. Churchill," he said, "and Heaven will reward you! Pray count upon me if I can be of any assistance. I will go and make out the certificate."

Spenser Churchill accompanied him to his gig, then lit a cigarette, and paced up and down for a few minutes, thinking intensely.

His voice and manner, while he had been talking with the simple-minded provincial doctor, had been completely under control—quiet, calm, and sadly sympathetic; but now that he was alone he felt that his hands were shaking, and that his face was white.

"My dear—Spenser——" he murmured. "Steady—steady!" and he held his hand out and regarded it critically. "No shaking and trembling! Chance—or shall we say Providence—has placed a great game in your hands, and you must play it properly if you mean to win, and you do mean to win! Great Heavens, what a narrow escape it was! Another minute, another half minute, and you would have been removed from this terrestial sphere! And to think that he should have died just at the critical moment! It was a special interposition! Let me think—now, steady, my dear fellow, steady! Jeffrey dead—thank Heaven! —no one but myself knows the secret of this girl's birth! The papers—" he took them from his pocket, and looked at them, and it may be stated to his credit, that a shudder ran through him as he did so, for they still seemed warm by their contact with their dead owner, from whom he had stolen them—"yes, he was right. They are all here: proof incontestable, evidence that no one, not even the dear marquis, could refute! No one knows of their existence but myself! And she is friendless, for my letter has done its work, and Cecil Neville is too far off to undo it! We must keep you in Ireland, dear Cecil, we cannot have you back interfering in this business. No one knows that Doris Marlowe is the daughter of the Marquis of Stoyle, but me. Spenser, my dear fellow, you hold all the cards, play them carefully and properly, and—" he flung the stump of his cigarette into the hedge, and smoothing his face into its usual bland expression, returned to the cottage.

The woman, the wife of the woodman, stood waiting for him.

"How is poor Miss Marlowe, Mrs. Jelf?" he said.

Mrs. Jelf dropped a curtsey.

"Ah, poor young thing, sir!" she said wiping her eyes with her apron. "She's lying down, sir, quite worn out and looking like a corpse herself! It don't seem as if she had strength to speak or move! I was thinking, sir, that we'd better send for her friends——"

"Not at present, I think, Mrs. Jelf," he said gently. "I think she had better be left to herself for a while. I have promised the doctor to do all I can in my poor way——"

"Oh, sir, I knew you've a kind heart," murmured Mrs. Jelf.

"We must all do our simple best, Mrs. Jelf," he replied lifting up his eyes. "I happen to know something of the poor fellow who lies upstairs, and for the sake of old times, you understand, and for the sake of the poor young lady——"

"And she such a sweet young thing!" said Mrs. Jelf, beginning to cry again.

—"I will do my best for her. I am now going to town, and I think, Mrs. Jelf, it would be as well, if anyone enquires for Miss Marlowe, if you told them that she is not well enough to see anybody. And if there should be any letters, perhaps you will give them to me; I will keep them until poor Miss Marlowe is strong enough to see them. At such times as these, in moments of such deep sorrow as this, Mrs. Jelf, the human heart must not be harassed by contact with the outer world."

"No, indeed, sir," assented Mrs. Jelf, quite touched by such sympathetic consideration. "I won't let anyone see her, and she shan't be worried by anything. I'll keep people from her, and I'll give you any letters."

"Thank you, I think it will be better," said Spenser Churchill. "Perhaps you might tell Miss Marlowe that a friend—you need not mention my name; you might say the doctor—has gone to the theatre and will make all arrangements. All she has to do is to try and remain quiet. Rest, rest, my dear Mrs. Jelf, is the great soother for the—er—tortured breast," and leaving this sublime piece of sentiment to do its work in honest Mrs. Jelf's mind, he went off to Barton.

Ill news travels apace, and the tidings of Jeffrey's sudden death had reached the theatre even before Spenser Churchill arrived there.

His manner with the manager was simply perfection.

"I came on at once, my dear sir," he said, "because I felt that you should be the first to know of this—er—dreadful calamity. I am fully sensible of the responsible position you occupy, and that your relations as a manager with the public entitle you to every consideration. Of course, Miss Marlowe will not act for some time if ever she acts again."

"Of course, of course!" said the manager, rather blankly. "Poor Jeffrey! An admirable man, sir; admirable! Might have been a great actor himself, but he contented himself with presenting an ornament to the stage, in his adopted daughter. A great genius, Miss Marlowe, Mr. Churchill! Splendid! magnificent! A wonderful ca-

reer before her! Of course, she can't be expected to act, at present, certainly not; but in time—ahem!—in time."

"We shall see," said Spenser Churchill. "In time, perhaps; but I cannot say. I am authorized to speak for Miss Marlowe; but this I will say, that if she should resume her professional career, you—you, will have the first claim upon her!" and he shook the manager's hand in so emphatic and impressive a manner, that the manager was quite touched.

Two hours afterwards all Barton was placarded with the announcement that, in consequence of sudden domestic bereavement, Miss Doris Marlowe would not appear that evening, and that in place of "Romeo and Juliet," would be performed the famous drama, "The Corsican Brothers."

Mr. Spenser Churchill was as good as his word. If he had been a near and dear relative of the bereaved girl, he could not more completely have taken the whole arrangements into his own hands. He saw to the funeral, examined the dead man's papers and effects; even carried his thoughtful consideration so far as to ask Mrs. Jelf to order mourning for Miss Marlowe and herself. In fact, he did all that was necessary on such mournful occasions,—all except one thing. By a strange oversight, Mr. Spenser Churchill omitted to send notice of the death to the newspapers, so that there was nothing to tell Lord Cecil Neville, away in Ireland, that the girl he loved had suddenly been left alone in the world!

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALONE in the world! Lying back in a chair by the open window of the woodman's cottage—for she could not bring herself to go back to the lodgings in Barton, where every inanimate object would remind her of the father-like friend she had lost—Doris kept repeating the ominous words to herself. Although a week had passed since the funeral she had not yet recovered from the terrible blow, and as she lay back with half closed eyes and white wan face she still looked "like one wandering in other worlds than this."

The dead man had been so much to her. Mother, father, brother,—indeed her only friend and companion—that the sense of helplessness which follows all bereavement was intensified in her case. She was indeed utterly alone; drifting on the stream of life like a rudderless vessel, to be blown hither and thither by the cruel caprice of every wind. Since the day of Jeffrey's death she had seen no one excepting the kind-hearted woman of the cottage, Mrs. Jelf; and had done nothing but commune in silence with the great sorrow that had fallen upon her.

In one day, in one hour, she had lost her lover and the man who had been as a father to her.

She tried to put all thought of Lord Cecil Neville away from her, and to think of Jeffrey alone, but with an anger of remorse she found that the loss of her lover seemed almost as great a grief as the death of poor Jeffrey.

All day long she dwelt upon the joy and happiness of those few short days while he had been here; recalling every word she had spoken, every tone of the musical voice that seemed to have spoken of nothing but love—deep, true, passionate love to her. She remembered how many times he had kissed her, the fond endearing names he had called her, and now it was all over! So completely a thing of the past, and gone from her life, that it appeared more like a dream than a reality. Were it not for the aching void in her heart, and the letter—the cruel letter he had written, and that lay crushed and hidden against her bosom,—she could almost have believed that no such person as Cecil Neville existed.

Where was he now? she wondered. Did he still think of her? or had he never really loved her?

"Who am I, that I should have won the love of such as he?" she asked herself over and over again. "No, he never loved me! He never loved me, while I——" Then she would cover her face with her hands, and wish that she could find relief in the unshed tears that seemed to scorch her heart.

This morning, as she sat by the window, her hands folded listlessly in her lap, thinking and thinking till her head ached, wishing that she lay in the quiet churchyard beside Jeffrey, Mrs. Jelf came into the room, and, speaking in the subdued voice which is perhaps the most irritating and trying to one in Doris's condition, said,—

"How do you find yourself this morning, miss?"

"I am quite well," said Doris rousing herself.

"I'm glad to hear it, miss," responded Mrs. Jelf, gently arranging the pillow, which she had insisted upon placing in the armchair. "Do you think you are well enough to see anyone this morning?"

"To see anyone?" said Doris, with a start, and a sudden thrill of the heart, for a wild, mad hope arose within her breast that it might be Cecil Neville.

"Yes, miss; you are not to, unless you quite like, he says, but if you do feel strong enough—"

"He—who?" asked Doris.

"Mr. Spenser Churchill, the gentleman who has been so kind all through your great trouble, miss."

The color ebbed from Doris's face, and she sank back.

"Mr. Spenser Churchill," she said vacantly, then a vague sense of dread fell upon her, and she recalled Jeffrey's warning.

"Yes, miss; the kindest hearted gentleman as ever I knew. I'm sure, if he'd been your own father or brother, he couldn't have done more. Why, he's seen to everything, you know.

Doris thrilled with an indefinable alarm and remorse.

"Who—why did you not tell me? Why should he do all this?" she asked.

"Well, miss, because it's his nature, I suppose," replied Mrs. Jelf. "You see, he's what they call a—a philanthropish: always ready to do a kind action, and—lor, come to that, who wouldn't be glad to do anything for a sweet young creature like yourself, left so friendless and helpless? There he is now, just coming up the path. Now, you're not to see him unless you feel strong enough; he can wait, he says——"

"Will you please tell Mr. Churchill that I will see him," said Doris, and Mrs. Jelf, after another pat or two to the pillow, went out.

Doris tried to brace herself for the coming interview. Her mind had been so clouded that she had until this moment realized all that this strange gentleman—against whom poor Jeffrey had warned her as her greatest foe—had done for her; and she scarcely knew how to receive him.

The door opened and Spenser Churchill entered. He was dressed in black, and his face was almost seraphic with its expression of reverent sympathy.

"Do not rise, my dear young lady," he murmured softly. "Mrs. Jelf assured me that you felt equal to seeing me; indeed, wished me to do, or I should not have intruded upon the sacred solitude of your grief."

Notwithstanding the honeyed accents, the words seemed to sound artificial to Doris's acute sense, and she turned her large dark eyes upon him with an unconscious scrutiny.

"I am quite well, and I did wish to see you, sir," she said. "I wish to thank you for all you have done for me. I scarcely know yet the extent of your kindness,"—her voice faltered—"I think I must have been ill, for I seem to have forgotten—" she put her hand to her brow for a moment, then with an effort recovered herself.

"What I have done, my dear Miss Marlowe, does not deserve a word of thanks. It has been a sad satisfaction to me to have been of some slight service to you."

"But you have done everything," persisted Doris, in a low voice,—"everything! Why—?" she stopped abruptly, the question sounded a cold and ungrateful one.

But Mr. Spenser Churchill filled up the pause.

"You would—and not unnaturally—ask why I have taken upon myself to interfere in your affairs, my dear young lady?"

Doris made a slight gesture of dissent.

—"Well, we will not say interfere," he murmured softly; "we will use the word 'interested.' The question is very easily answered. For one thing, I happened to be on the spot when your poor guardian—but we will not recall the sad scene," he broke off, as Doris winced and her face grew paler. "And the second reason is that I was once a friend of poor Mr. Jeffrey's."

He shot a sharp glance at her, unseen by her, and sighed.

"I understand your surprise," he said mournfully. "You will observe that I said that I was once a friend. Some time ago, I regret to say, a difference arose between us. I do not know whether you know the circumstances, whether he ever told you?"

Doris shook her head, and he emitted a suppressed and inaudible sigh of relief.

"Well, well, we will not speak of it; but this I will say, the quarrel, the misunderstanding, arose from no fault of his. The fault was mine, entirely mine, my dear young lady!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

FOR THE SEASON.

A very pretty and unique present for a gentleman is a postage stamp case. The material is celluloid. The inside case is made the exact size to hold the stamps folded, while the outside case is large enough to hold the inner one.

After glueing the sides and bottom together, tie pretty knots on each side. The inner case has a loop of ribbon in the centre of the two edges and on each side. The inner case has a loop of ribbon attached for pulling out. This case is intended to be carried in the pocket. The outside can be decorated in any manner to suit the taste; letters, embossed in leather, are very stylish and useful as well.

An exquisite case for photographs is made of a piece of a chamois skin, something larger than the cabinet size of photograph in order that it may accommodate a number of pictures. It is in the form of a sealed envelope with one end cut open. It is lined throughout with some delicate shade of China silk, with a thin interlining of wadding sprinkled over with sachet powder.

Some dainty flower, leaf or bud should be painted on the flap of the envelope, with a bit of vine trailing down over the right hand corner and around to the back. Any motto can be used, if agreeable, on the outside of the case. A heavy gold bullion cord is used on the edge for finishing.

Chamois and tissue paper are the two inexpensive materials which seem to have caught the popular fancy, the most beautiful necktie cases, handkerchief boxes, lamp shades, parlor sachets and hosts of ornamental articles being made from both these materials.

For a gentleman friend a useful gift is a handsome waste-paper basket. Procure an open wicker-work basket and lace two shades of satin ribbon in and out alternately; then line the basket with some warm, rich shade of primrose yellow or cardinal. For a border, use a plush valance cut in vandykes and embroider in long and short stitch some all-over pattern of flowers, buds and leaves in various colored silks. The edges of the vandyke are chain-stitched in several rows with different hues of silk, and the upper edge finished with a plaiting of satin ribbon. At the base tie a large satin ribbon.

A suitable present for a lady or gentleman who rides a great deal, is in the form of a carriage rug. Colored felt or broadcloth is the most serviceable, and looks very well with a large monogram worked in the centre and a spray of flowers in each corner.

It is also effective to work a design of flowers and leaves on a broad band of dark blue, green or red, and stitch this on the main cloth, adding long stitches on either side of the band: of thread the same color. They should be very long, "spikey" stitches which are the most effective and also quickly done.

A pretty comb-case for a gentleman—Take two pieces of tan-colored chamois skin, four inches long and one and a quarter inches wide. Decorate both sides, one with an initial, and the other with a pretty spray. Bind them with a narrow crimson ribbon, and ornament this binding at regular distances with knots of tan-colored twist, then overhand the two pieces together.

USES OF PAPER.—The use of paper for building purposes—that is to say, flexible sheets made of vegetable or other fibre which has been reduced to a pulp and then spread out, pressed, and dried—is finding favor amongst builders.

They advance several reasons for this new application of paper stuff. In the first place, it can be made in rolls of almost any width and length, is flexible, or, by glueing several layers together, may be made stiff, and will stop the passage of air, because there are no joints.

Secondly, it has no grain like wood, and will not split.

Thirdly, it is not affected by change of temperature, and therefore has an advantage over sheet metal as roofing material.

Fourthly, whereas in its natural condition it is affected by moisture, it may be rendered waterproof by saturating with asphalte, or by a variety of other methods.

Fifthly, it is a non-resonant, and well fitted to prevent the passage of sound.

Sixtly, it is a non-conductor of heat, and can be made also of incombustible material like asbestos, or rendered fire-resisting by chemical treatment. The combination of paper with other substances, and solidifying the mass by pressure, renders practicable the use of a material capable of replacing wood for many purposes.

Bric-a-Brac.

EVERGREENS.—In Druidical times people were in the habit of dressing their houses with green boughs on the 1st of December, in order that the sylvan spirits might repair unruffled by the frosts and cold winds till the return of spring renewed the foliage of their beloved abodes.

THE YEAR'S LOAF.—There is an old custom still widely practised in the south of France, namely, the hanging from the ceiling of a room in every house of a loaf of bread that has been baked on the 25th December. This is supposed to bring plenty during the ensuing year. No doubt the origin of this was the ancient offering of a cake to the divinities who watched over a Gallic family.

THE YULE LOG.—This was a huge log of wood (in some places a block of coal answered the same purpose) which our ancestors lit on Christmas-eve, and kept burning throughout the whole of the next day. It has been considered to be emblematical of the return of the sun. A piece of it was always preserved to light the next year's yule with. It was also considered a charm against evil spirits and illnesses.

CANDLES.—On the night of Christmas-eve it was usual to light up candles of enormous size, and of various colors, called Christmas candles, which were gaily decorated with ribands and garlands. This custom still obtains in Ireland, and in the north of England. Indeed, Christmas was primitively called the "Feast of Lights" in the church; and in these candles we trace a remnant of the Saturnalia, for during that festival it was customary among the Romans to give wax candles to each other, in token, no doubt, of the anticipated change in the season.

FORFEIT.—Amongst the most curious of recorded wills is that of a Mr. Thomas Tuke, of Wath, near Rotherham, England, who, dying in 1819, bequeathed a penny to every child that attended his funeral. An old woman had for eleven years attended him; to her he bequeathed the munificent sum of five dollars only, for, as he expressed it, "tucking him up in bed." A further whimsy of the humorist was a bequest of forty dozen penny buns, to be thrown from the church tower at noon on Christmas Day for ever. For some years the buns continued to be thrown from the church tower, and a large crowd below indulged in such horseplay that limbs were broken in the struggle. These lamentable results led to the distribution of only six dozen from the church tower in the manner enjoined by the will, the remaining thirty-four dozen being quietly given away below.

BACHELORS AND CHILDREN.—The bachelor seated at dinner in his palatial club. What a Christmas dinner! Dead ash! The meat is tasteless, the wine possesses no bouquet, the surroundings, gorgeous though they be, are colorless. The "might have been" is at work, and the wearied man's mind's eye, is busy with scenes so bright, so joyous as to fairly dazzle it. Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand! During Christmas our children are fairly in Paradise, from the bejeweled little maid who receives "gifts from gods" in the shape of priceless mechanical toys and costly knick-knacks, to the sick orphan in the hospital cot, who dreams of her wooden doll, or her tiny work-box, and takes her physic with a smile, knowing that Christmas, with all its delights, is close at hand, and that the generous paw of Santa Claus will open for her as surely as the day will dawn.

ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS.—The type of Christmas existed long before Christianity in the Saturnalia of the ancients, which took place about the winter solstice. Nearly a century had elapsed from the birth of its founder before the followers of Christianity introduced the observance of this day in commemoration of the Nativity; and upon the second anniversary, the Emperor Diocletian, who was keeping his court at Nicomedia, ordered the doors of the church, in which hundreds of people were engaged in solemnising the festival, to be nailed up and the building to be set on fire. During the Saturnalia presents were interchanged, houses were decorated with evergreens, no criminal was punished, no arms were taken up, and slaves were permitted to sit at table with their masters, in allusion to the equality which was supposed to have existed during the reign of Saturn—"the Golden Age." All these Pagan customs find their counterpart among the festivities carried on by the Christians. Indeed, it was the policy of the early Church to incorporate as many of them as possible in order to facilitate conversion.

SNOW.

BY A. H. BALDWIN.

There are flakes in the air, there are flakes in the furrow,
And flakes on the meadows, and flakes on the lea,
And the grey rabbit sits snug at home on his barrow,
And the brown squirrel nestles at home in the tree.

There are white showers falling and white showers lying
On mansion and cottage, on barn and on byre,
There are voices kind-speaking, and voices replying,
And hearts beating gladly at every home-fire.

There is snow in the woodlands, and snow on the plain too;
And snow on the mountain, and snow on the moor;
But what to fair women is that, or brave men, too?
Since peace and good will knock at every door.

It may be, that most of us, parted for ever
Shall be, ere again fall the snow-flakes to earth:
It must be that some of our circle shall never
See once more the feast of the Saviour's birth.

A Lord's Daughter.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A PIECE OF PATCHWORK," "SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER," "A MIDSUMMER FOLLY," "WEDDED HANDS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"OH, no, no,'' she cried, and in her eyes there was the look of a hunted animal—"I cannot do that! This very day I am going to ask him to let me off that promise. Adrian, he does not love me. It is the same as with you—he only wants the money I shall bring him to keep up the title. Besides, there is another reason—a reason I cannot tell you—which makes it impossible; even if I were free—if Lucille gave you your liberty to-day—I could not be your wife. There is only one man on earth that I can ever marry."

"Not that man, Kathleen," he said, in a horror-stricken whisper—"that man I saw you with on the terrace, to whom I heard you give a promise? It is not that man you mean?"

She bent her head sadly in sorrowful assent.

"But this is horrible—outrageous!" he cried wildly. "What hold can a person of that kind have upon Lord Elwyn's daughter? What possible claim can such a person dare to make?"

"A claim Lord Elwyn's daughter herself gave him, Adrian," she answered sadly. "Say no more! My past is bound to my present by fetters of iron. I cannot shake myself free of it. Do not ask me more; it wearies me even to think of it, Adrian."

"And you intend to marry this—this person?"

"I do not know. I hope not—not if I can help it—not if I can live unmarried. But what am I to do? I cannot live here; I may not live with Lady Elwyn. If I were poor I might go out and earn my living as a governess or companion, and so find a home. But how can I—an heiress with ninety-eight thousand pounds—live alone at my age?"

"My dearest Kathleen, better that she should live alone than marry beneath her to certain misery! Find out some old friend—is there not one of your schoolfellows?—or else advertise and engage a companion, and go and live wherever you fancy—in London or in the country—anywhere, so long as you remain free to lead your own life in peace."

She looked at him earnestly. The idea was entirely new to her; and the advice was his. That alone would have recommended it to her.

"I have never thought of that," she said thoughtfully. "I might do that certainly—if——"

She meant if she could get rid both of Lord Elwyn and of Tom Darley. Was there any spot on earth where these two men would not hunt her out and persecute her with their unwelcome solicitation? Kathleen doubted it. Nevertheless the scheme was worthy of careful consideration.

"Thank you very much, Adrian. Your advice is sensible, if only I could manage to follow it. I will, at any rate, think it over carefully, and endeavor to do as you have suggested. I am very grateful to you," she said after a pause; "you have always been good to me."

"And will you let me help you?"

"Oh; yes! That is, if—if Lucille—— Oh, it will be better not to anger her, Adrian—when she is better, it will be wiser for you to go away!"

He could not but see that she was right.

"I suppose so," Sir Adrian answered gloomily.

"Go now," she said softly. "Let us go back to the house by different ways. Lucille's windows look this way; her maid perhaps——"

She hesitated.

"Yes—yes—I understand your meaning; I know you are right. I will go in. Follow me quickly to the house by the farther side of the lake. It is getting late and damp, and your skirts and boots are wet already. Promise to come in quickly and change them, child."

She smiled almost gaily at the practical nature of his suggestions, and promised obedience. Then he raised her hand to his lips, and, dropping it swiftly, turned and left her.

There was a movement behind the laurel-bushes close by. Kathleen looked round sharply.

She almost fancied that somebody was concealed behind them. She stood still for a moment and listened, and, hearing nothing more, took the longer and more circuitous route back to the Castle.

* * * * * *

Tom Darley had not been near enough to hear; but he had been quite near enough to see. Skulking behind the thick shelter of the shrubbery and crouching low when he came to stunted bushes of holly and laurel, he had slowly crept alongside the couple who were sauntering together by the water's edge.

He had watched their meeting—the glad quickening footsteps, the bright smile on either side, and the clinging clasp of the eagerly outstretched hands. And then they had walked together, deeply engrossed in each other, his head had been bent towards her, her face upturned to his.

Once some strong emotion had shaken the man so that he had seemed almost to weep, and during those moments Kathleen's hand had rested upon his arm with a soft caressing motion.

At the sight Tom Darley had shaken his fist at them. Then he had seen them part—had watched how Sir Adrian lifted her hand to his lips, and then how they had turned away rapidly in opposite directions.

In those days Tom Darley's passion had reached such a pitch of despair, jealousy, and suspicion that it resembled madness rather than love.

Brooding upon one idea now for over three years had rendered him no longer a reasonable human being, but something much akin to an unreasoning wild animal.

He had too the strange cunning of a lunatic; he could pretend to be a quiet silent man, going unobtrusively about his business and occupied only in seeking for respectable employment, so as to delude completely as to his nature those whom he mixed with.

Long previously he had given up his farm and his honest work in order to devote himself to what he deemed the great object of his existence.

He had some money laid by—enough to keep him in idleness—and, having sold for a small sum of ready money the goodwill of the acres where he had worked so industriously, he had been able to exist upon this in comfort.

In order to remain in the neighborhood of Clortell Towers, he had installed himself in a humble lodging in a farm-house at no great distance from the Castle; he gave out that he was a gamekeeper out of place, and that he desired to get an engagement on Lord Elwyn's estate; and he contrived also to keep his old cob at the livery-stables of the village inn, in order to be able to go out hunting when the hounds met near, with the sole object of gazing at Kathleen and of keeping a watch over her.

Thus for some time he had been on the spot, and had been able to dog her footsteps and follow her proceedings in a manner totally unsuspected by her.

When he had given her a promise a short time before to leave her alone until her twenty-first birthday, he had no intention of going away, only of keeping as far as he could out of her sight, so that she might not be troubled by his presence.

In spite of his spying and prying, Tom was very considerably bewildered in his mind as to Kathleen's admirers. He knew of course, as did everybody, high and low, upon the estate, that Sir Adrian Deverell was the promised husband of Lady Elwyn's niece, Miss Maitland, and that their wedding, before Lord Elwyn's death, had been actually fixed for the first week in February; therefore his suspicions had naturally fallen more upon Colonel Elwyn than upon Adrian.

Moreover, he had more than once followed Alfred and Kathleen home after a day's hunting, and had discovered that they invariably rode home together.

For a long time Adrian had carefully avoided Kathleen in public; so that Tom had not had occasion to suspect his real feelings towards her.

On the other hand, he had never been able to make out satisfactorily who it was whom he had seen with her three years before in the kitchen-garden.

Upon that long-ago moonlit night, when he had peered through the bars of the old iron gateway, he had seen a man walking with Kathleen whose arm had been round her waist and who had kissed her lips.

That memory had never faded from his mind, and had seethed like madness in his blood ever since; but, for all that, he was not able to determine who that man had been.

He had seen Kathleen plainly, because the moon had shone upon her: but he had not seen the face of the man who kissed her, because it was turned away from him and was in the shadow.

Neither was he absolutely certain that it must have been Colonel Elwyn, because he had never been able to ascertain whether Colonel Elwyn had arrived there only twenty-four hours later. Altogether there was much confusion in his mind about the whole matter.

Sometimes he fancied there must be a third man in whom Kathleen was interested: sometimes, again, he endeavored to cheat himself with the fond belief that her heart was really his, although her love of money and position stood between them.

The perception of the impossibility of a union between himself, the rough-bred farmer, and Lord Elwyn's heiress never came home to him in the least. In his eyes she was always the little Kathie he had known in the old days, dressed in print-gowns and sun-bonnets like any other village maiden, tending her bees and flowers, handing the beer-can to thirsty haymakers, and lending a helping hand with rake or sickle at whatever work was going on at the farm.

In those days she had plighted her troth to him; and in poor Tom's eyes that promise made her his. No change of clothes or of station could alter the irrevocable fact that she belonged to him, and that no other man had a better right to her than himself.

There was something pitiable in his devotion and his doggedness, and something alarming too; for Tom Darley had within him passions which were ungovernable and savage, and which only needed to be ignited to blaze out into what would render him actually dangerous.

Now, as he slowly followed Kathleen's slight figure, keeping well in the distance and dodging behind shrubs and trees, he muttered savagely to himself as he went. It seemed to him that she was not only false but vile.

"She's no better than she should be!" he said to himself. "If she loved one honestly, it would not be so bad; but she don't! She can't even let Miss Maitland's sweetheart alone—shame on 'er! I wonder which it be she's sweet on—him or the new lord? Ah, I'll find out which of 'em it is, and I'll punish 'er through 'im whichever it be—cuss 'im!"

Kathleen had gone into the house. Tom crouched down by the wall of the terrace and waited. It was getting dark now, for it was five o'clock; but the windows of the small drawing-room were uncurtained, and a bright fire lit up the room with the brilliance of day to the fiery eyes of the watcher.

He knew that by previous experience that it was here, since her father's death, that Kathleen habitually sat, for the most part in solitude: and presently, accordingly, he saw her come into the room, fling her hat and jacket upon a sofa, and proceed to hold up the damp skirt of her dress to the fire. She rang the bell, and a footman brought in a lamp.

He was about to close the curtains; but apparently she told him not to do so, and gave him some other order, for he withdrew quickly.

Tom, favored by the gathering darkness, cautiously drew near to the windows and crouched down by the house.

Kathleen seemed to be waiting for some one. With aimless uncertain movements, she strayed restlessly about the room, taking up a book and putting it down again, drawing a chair forward and then pushing it back again.

Frequently she raised her hand to her head as though distracted by her thoughts, and then she leaned against the mantel-piece studying the hands of the clock as though she was counting the seconds as they flew.

He could see her slight figure delineated against the fire-glow; its dainty outlines, in the close fitting black-dress, were full of suppleness and grace.

She rested her elbow upon the mantel-shelf and her cheek upon her hand, and the flickering light played upon her sweet pale face and reflected itself in the deep blue of her eyes. Even Tom Darley was greatly impressed by the tender charm of her beauty.

If she had lost somewhat of the careless freedom of the country-bred girl whom he had loved in days gone by, she had gained infinitely in a certain subtle refinement, which was no doubt born in her, and which education and association had cultivated to the utmost during the past three years.

"What a beauty she is!" murmured the rough man to himself admiringly.

"What a lady she do look! And she is mine—mine! I swore I'd do for any man as came between us to steal her from me, whoever he might be—and so I will! Only let me be sure which it is—that's all!"—and then he crouched down again and watched her.

Presently the door opened. The hidden watcher held his breath; he believed he was about to see Sir Adrian Deverell. The man who entered was the new Lord Elwyn.

"You sent for me, Kathleen?"

She went towards him quickly, with a little tremor of excitement.

"I feel that I must speak to you," she said nervously. "It is not right—it is not fair to you, Lord Elwyn—to delay what I have to say to you!"

He frowned a little, and his saturnine face looked a shade more grim than usual as he stood looking down upon her.

"What do you mean? And why do you not call me by my Christian name?"

She took no notice of the question, but went on hurriedly—

"I do not know what you will say to me, or whether perhaps you may not be very angry with me; and yet it is worse that we should go on like this, and that I should leave you in ignorance. I have wished for an opportunity of seeing you alone; but you have been so busy, and I so unhappy with my own grief in my own rooms, that I have not known how to seek an interview till this evening. When I came in, they told me you were disengaged; and so I thought I might venture to send for you."

"Pray explain your meaning, Kathleen," he said somewhat coldly and sternly. "To what does this long and mysterious preamble lead?"

"Only—only that I cannot be your wife."

"What?" He caught her by the wrist, almost with a savage violence, and held her tightly. "How dare you say such words to me?"

"Do not—— You hurt my hands!" she cried. "Oh, do not look so angry! You must know that that engagement between us can have no real binding force. The promise I gave you was wrung from me by my poor father's condition. Doctor Grieves had told me that to contradict him might be fatal to him. I did not care to oppose him. You must have known that; you must have seen it in my face—in my eyes. You must surely understand that in such a position as mine I was not a free agent!"

"What I understand is that you are bound to me by the most solemn oath by which it is possible for a woman to bind herself to a man—that across your dying father's body you swore to be my wife, and that you will merit his curse in this world and in the next if you break your oath to him now that he is dead!"

There was a brief silence. Lord Elwyn had spoken solemnly and impressively; subduing his rage, he had felt that the gravity of his appeal was the best chance he had of carrying his point.

He had spoken very seriously and sternly. Kathleen hung her head; she could not fail to be moved by such solemn words. For a few moments she was cowed and her heart failed her.

Was she indeed bound to this man, whom she certainly feared and almost began to hate? Then came a revulsion of her whole nature. No—ten thousand times no! It was impossible! Heaven could not be so unjust or man so cruel!

"He will not curse me!" she cried, flinging up her head bravely. "My father—who is now in heaven, and who, if he sees me at all, will be able to judge of my actions far more rightly than he could whilst he was on earth—will not allow those words which affection for him and consideration for his health caused me to utter to be brought up in judgment against me.

You cannot frighten me with a conjured-up vision of his spiritual vengence, Lord Elwyn. I refuse to be frightened—and I refuse to marry you!"

"Kathleen!"

"Listen to me! Do not be angry with me!"

She came up to him and laid her hands upon his arm.

"Do not become my enemy because I decline to be your wife! I have perhaps better and stronger reasons than you can possibly guess for what I am doing."

"Ah—some other man—that vile low intriguer perhaps!" he hissed.

"No, no—no other man! I am not going to marry at all. I am going to find some lady who will come and live with me, so that I may make a home for myself. That is what I am determined to do. I will marry neither you, Lord Elwyn, nor any other man."

"This is pure childishness! How can a girl so young, so pretty, so wealthy as you are, remain unmarried? You want me to believe that you are going to be an old maid—you are not yet twenty-one? It is ridiculous!"

"Ridiculous or no, it is what I am going to do; it is the firm conviction that I have come to within the last hour. There are reasons, Lord Elwyn, that would make it absolutely dangerous for me to marry you. I cannot explain; but, believe me, it is so. I cannot with safety marry either you or—or any other man; and, although there is certainly one man on earth I might marry, yet I so loath the thought of uniting my fate to his that to remain an old maid, as you put it, would be a life of supreme happiness in comparison with it. Lord Elwyn, be reasonable, I implore you! You are not at all in love with me——"

"Kathleen, how can you say so? I who worship and adore you!" he cried enthusiastically.

"No, no—I know better. What you worship and adore is not me, but the fortune which my father has left to me."

"Great heavens, how can you insult me like that?"

"It is not an insult; it is the truth—and you know it. You think it hard that the money should go away from the title, and you would like to marry me so that the two might be united. Well, I am quite of your opinion—I think it hard too. It would be much better if the money went to the owner of Clortell—far better for you to have it than me. Lord Elwyn I do not want all this money. Only give me enough to live upon in moderate comfort in London, and take the rest and let me go free."

His breath literally failed him from sheer amazement. He could not speak for a few minutes!

"Don't you see that in this way," she continued, "we shall each have what we want—you the money, and I my freedom? Let us settle it so."

For one wild moment it seemed to him that it was feasible and possible to take her at her word and to arrange matters in this way.

Then his sober senses returned to him, and he recollected that Miss Elwyn's fortune was in the hands of a whole legion of executors and trustees, that wills are not upset at the pleasure of a minor, and that quixotic gifts of upwards of ninety thousand pounds are not permitted to be bestowed without much scrutiny and many legal investigations.

What the girl, in her innocence and ignorance, had suggested so glibly and easily was clearly an absolute and utter impossibility. This becoming plain to him in a few moments, he grew only the angrier and harder towards her for it.

"Pshaw! You are talking like a child—an ignorant and foolish child! You cannot give away your money or upset a will; your trustees would not allow it. The Duke of Cawthorn is your father's executor. Do you suppose he would sanction such a mad proceeding? No, Kathleen; there is only one way in which you can bestow your money upon me or I can take it—and that is by becoming my wife. You are wrong in saying that I love only your money. I love you too. You are young and sweet and charming; I set my heart upon you years ago, when I first saw you, and I have wanted you ever since; and, by Heaven, I mean to have you!"

Suddenly he drew her towards him, and, before she could evade or resist him, he clasped her in his arms and kissed her fiercely on the brow and eyes.

"Here is my answer!" he cried, fired by the contact of so fair a form. "And this—and this is my last word about it!"

Then he released her and, laughing shortly and triumphantly, Lord Elwyn left the room.

She slid, half fainting, from his grasp down upon her knees on the floor, and buried her face shudderingly in her hands.

She felt herself debased and desecrated by his kisses, and, though in her wild struggle for liberty she had managed to keep her lips safe from his unmanly attack, her forehead seemed to burn and scorch with the pollution of his touch.

There came into her mind a wild thought of flight—of escape from all the horrors of her position; for she felt unnerved and frightened by the scene she had gone through.

She would have been more frightened still could she have seen the pale, haggard face that peered through the window at her cowering form.

Tom Darley's hand was already upon the window-catch; already he had made the discovery that it was insecurely fastened, and that one vigorous shake would be sufficient to force it open.

He was on the point of opening it and entering when something stayed his hand and made him draw back again and wait. The door of the boudoir was again opened, and Sir Adrian Deverell entered the room. Tom shrank down again and watched.

He saw Kathleen spring to her feet at his entrance and dash away the tears from her eyes with an impetuous gesture of despair.

He could not hear the words of the interview any more than he had been able to hear those of the previous one, although he had strained every nerve to listen. He only saw that Adrian's face was full of a deep and unmistakeable emotion as he spoke to the girl in low and earnest tones, and he saw in his eyes that abandonment of love and tenderness which is reflected upon the features of every true-hearted man as he spoke to the one woman on earth whom he loves.

Tom, rough and common as he was, was not mistaken at all in that expression; he understood it quite as well as if he had been an educated and polished gentleman. He ground his teeth and clenched his hard coarse hands in impotent fury at the sight.

These two men loved her! Which of the two did she favor? For which of them did she mean to throw over her early love and betray the sweetheart of her youth? That was what Tom Darley intended to find out.

He could not gather much from the interview he now witnessed. Kathleen seemed to be distracted with grief; Sir Adrian seemed to be entreating her to confide the source of her trouble to him.

He held her hands, he looked pleadingly into her tear-stained face, he seemed to be endeavoring to console and comfort her; but he did not stay long. Presently he dropped her hands, and, with a few grave words, to which she listened with drooping head and down cast eyes, turned and left her.

As the door closed softly behind him, Kathleen flung herself passionately face downwards upon the sofa and wept as if her heart would break. Now was Tom Darley's time. He pushed the French window inwards—it yielded easily to his touch—and softly entered the room.

Kathleen, half suffocated by her sobs, heard him not, saw him not. He came and stood close by her, watching her heaving shoulders, her dishevelled hair, the quick panting of her laboring breath; a curious mingling of passions was in his dark uncouth face—love, hatred, jealousy, the tenderest compassion and the deepest scorn chased each other in quick succession over his rough-hewn features.

Suddenly he put forth his hand and laid it on her shoulder.

She started violently, sat upright upon the sofa, and at the sight of him uttered a smothered cry and turned deadly pale.

"Which is it, lass—which is it?" he said, in a low hissing whisper. "It's all I wanted to ask of ye—which of them two is it—which—which?"

"What do you mean, Tom?" she gasped, pressing her hands with all her strength upon her throat to stop the almost convulsive cries which in her unnerved state seemed to be forcing their way into existence. "How did you come here, Tom? Who let you in?"

She grew calmer as she asked the questions.

"Never you mind, Kathie. Answer me what I ask of you. I've seen 'em both, mind—seen 'em with my own eyes; so you can't deceive me or lie to me. Is it the man as kissed you so hard and held you so tight in his arms—the new Lord Elwyn—who is him as has come between you and me? Is that the man? Or is it the other—him as went out just this minute, Miss Maitland's sweetheart—as is makin' up to you and making ye false to me?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" she cried wildly.

She was half beside herself with terror, for there was something in the very calmness of his questionings which seemed to freeze the blood within her and to revive again all her worst and most horrible fears.

"No, no, Tom—it's not he—not Sir Adrian Deverell! He is, as you say, Miss Maitland's lover; he is nothing to me—nothing—I do not even like him! He talks to me about—about her; to me he is nothing—nothing—nothing!"

She clutched at his hands in her desperate terror, grasping them tight and pressing them hard between her own.

"Ah, then it is the other—it is Lord Elwyn!"

He spoke slowly, and his eyes looked black and gloomy.

"If it ain't one, Kathie, it's t'other! Ye can't hoodwink me—I've seen too much. It's Lord Elwyn as stands between us, lass! Don't you go for to deny it! If it ain't Sir Adrian, it be the new lord. Is it him?"

"Yes, yes—it is he!" she answered distractedly. "It is no one else—it is Lord Elwyn!"

"Thank you, my girl. Then now I knows for certain."

And, without another word, he turned and went quickly out into the night again.

"Oh, merciful heaven, forgive me!" burst with an exceedingly bitter cry from her white and trembling lips.

She flung up her arms wildly, and then fell back on to the floor in a dead swoon.

* * * * * *

Lucille was better. The fever had left her; she had slept soundly for several consecutive nights; she had eaten manifold boiled soles and numerous wings of pheasants; and more than a dozen champagne-bottles had found their way into her sick-room.

On this day she was to get up and be carried for the first time into her aunt's morning-room.

There had certainly been no pretence about her malady in the first instance. She had been genuinely and seriously ill; the shock of her uncle's terrible death—the awful spectacle that she had witnessed—his gasping curses, his delirious ravings, and the frightful suddenness of his end—had quite unhinged her mind and flung her for some days into a brain-fever; but, when she began to recover, she feigned to be ill a good deal longer than she could be actually said to be so; and her convalescence lasted longer than it need have done.

Lucille wanted to gain time. So long as she was shut up in her bed-room, with her maid as her sole attendant and the Doctor as her only visitor, no inconvenient and distressing questions were likely to be put to her.

The longer the period of the time that elapsed between her uncle's death and her reappearance in daily life, the better chance there would be for the events of the evening of his death to become forgotten. Lucille did not want to be cross-questioned about those events.

It was true enough that she had pretty well know that to give a man very ill with disease of the heart a mental shock such as she had proposed to give her uncle was to run the almost certain risk of shortening his life—and Lucille had meant to shorten his life; what she had not intended to do was to bring it to such a very sudden termination.

She had intended Lord Elwyn to die of the result of her communication; but she had not intended him to die so soon as he did.

She had intended him to alter his will first—to cut his daughter's name out of it and insert her own in its place—and then, when that righteous deed was accomplished, to die quietly and naturally in his bed, so that no one should have thought there was anything strange or unforseen about it.

But Lord Elwyn had provokingly upset all those clever calculations, and had chosen to die in a fit of raving delirium quite half an hour before it was convenient and rational that he should die; and the will had consequently remained unaltered.

Lucille was specially anxious that nobody should discover the fact that, previously to fetching Mr. Williams out of the morning-room and taking him up to her uncle's room, she had sat for ten minutes or more quite alone by her uncle's bedside.

If that came to be known, would not some connection be certainly made between that visit and the poor man's violent and sudden end?

Would it not be very naturally said that something in that interview must have occurred to agitate and produce in him that condition of violent excitement which the doctors had specially bidden his attendants to beware of?

The only person who could say anything about this interview of Lucille's with her uncle was Mrs. Hyam. She alone knew that Lucille had been left alone for some time in her uncle's bed-room.

When the catastrophe of Lord Elwyn's death had occurred, Mrs. Hyam had come rushing up the back-stairs in violent haste, and had entered the room just as life became extinct in the poor gentleman.

Feeling at once that blame might very possibly be attached to her for her absence on the momentous occasion, and knowing in her heart that she had lingered unduly long in the upper-footman's pantry whilst that gentleman had been pleasantly engaged in offering to her a glass of sherry and a slice of plum-cake in conjunction with his hand and his heart, Mrs. Hyam hastened to exclaim, upon the entrance of the doctors, that she had only just run out to the top of the back-stairs for one minute to see if the housemaid was bringing up some clean bed-linen that she had ordered.

"How long were you out of the room, Mrs. Hyam?" had asked Sir Augustus.

"Not ten seconds, sir! Just as Miss Maitland and Mr. Williams came along the passage, I ran out; I couldn't have been away long enough for to count twenty. His lordship was in bed quite comfortable and quiet when I left him."

"Dear, dear—then it must have been frightfully sudden!" murmured the great Doctor gravely. "A sudden spasm of pain, I imagine, which no one could have foreseen, made him spring out of bed no doubt, with, alas, this sad result!"

And so it was decided in minds medical to have been the case; whilst Mrs. Hyam, fearful of the truth leaking out and of losing her character for vigilance and attention, took herself off to London by the earliest train in the morning, informing the upper-footman, as she bade him adieu, that she wished to goodness she had never set eyes on his "ugly mug," which had kept her out of her patient's room when the death scene took place.

"If ever you tell on me, John, I'll never be yours!" she said to him. "If you keep your mouth shut, I'll bear you in mind and let you know my answer."

And, as Mrs. Hyam was a widow in a very good way of business, John did keep his mouth shut, especially as nobody thought of making it worth his while to open it.

In these circumstances Lucille had nothing to fear from Mrs. Hyam. If no one took the trouble to question her, Mrs. Hyam to the end of time would never speak to anybody of the events of that memorable evening.

On regaining her senses and her powers of thought, the very first question which Lucille asked of her maid was:

"Where is that nurse?"

"What nurse, miss?"

"That hired nurse—Mrs. Hyam."

"She? Oh, she went away long ago, miss—directly poor Lord Elwyn was dead!"

"And a good riddance too!" added Noble to herself, for the upper-footman was a well-grown handsome young man, and, before Mrs. Hyam's advent, he had not been wholly insensible to the charms of Sophia Noble.

"Them sort of hired people makes a deal o' mischief in a comfortable household, miss," continued Noble.

"And drat all them designing widders, say I!" she added to herself.

After that, Lucille was easier in her mind—Mrs. Hyam out of the way, no one else could do her any harm; and, so long as no questions were raised and Alfred suspected nothing, the whole subject would probably never be revived.

Nevertheless she desired to let as long a time as possible elapse before her return to the daily habits of life.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

BE HUMBLE.—Put away presumption and pride. If they assail thy heart, think of the beginning and ending of life. Narrow, indeed, are the cradle and the coffin: in both we slumber alike helpless, to day a germinating dust, to-morrow a crumbling corse.

POOR GAIN.—When Aristotle was asked "what a man could gain by telling a falsehood?" he answered, "Not to be believed when he speaks the truth."

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

BY KRON.

Christmas is nigh—and what doth it bring?
What gifts do Hope and Memory bear?
Rise our spirits on rapture's wing,
Or sink we down on the couch of care?

How have we learned in the year gone by
Our daily task of trial and sorrow?
How oft have we curbed disappointment's sigh
With the powerful faith that enchants to-morrow?

Christmas is nigh, and the trusting heart
That hath suffered meekly its share of pain
Must measure the worth of life's joyous part,
And count the best links of affection's chain.

A Merry Christmas.

BY M. G. S.

SIR SIMON SKINNER was an old bachelor. He was a City man, too, and one who had made a very large fortune in trade. He had been Lord Mayor of London some twenty years before the date of our story. He had on that grand occasion knelt down before his Sovereign plain Mr. Skinner, and had risen Sir Simon Skinner, Baronet; and, therefore, very handsome in the eyes of mothers and daughters, for then, like Fancombridge, "he could make any goose a lady."

Naturally a very saving and, indeed, stingy nature, he yet, to the surprise of all who knew him well, bore his blushing honors bravely.

For one year he spent his money freely, and seldom has the City boasted a more splendid annual. But the year of his mayorality well over, Sir Simon retired to Skinner House—an old rambling country seat, near Bridgewater, in Somersetshire, and close to the marshes so dreary to view, and which he had bought cheap.

There, with two old, crabbed, but faithful servants—a man and his wife—he led the life of a miser and recluse.

Skinner House was called in the neighborhood Skindint Hall. It had once owned a grander name, because Henry VIII. had once slept there. It had belonged to the Lorraine family, and had been called Lorraine Court.

The last of the Lorraines, a gambler and a profligate, having run through his fortune and become completely ruined, had, as some said, committed suicide there. Others averred that he had been foully murdered in his bed at Lorraine Court. But all agreed, however he came to his end, that his ghost haunted the dreary old house and gloomy grounds; and for that reason old Skinner was the only person willing to inhabit the place. He got it at a very great bargain.

Sir Simon Skinner had no near relations. He had a married nephew, and a niece, also married. Both had large families, and were very needy. And he had one first and two second cousins. All these relatives were very poor; but, like all poor relatives, they impoverished themselves still more by making presents they could ill afford to the rich relative whom they hoped to conciliate, but who saw through them and their schemes, enjoyed the gifts, and laughed at the givers.

Doyly Skinner—Sir Simon's nephew—a briefless barrister of forty-two, who often went without a dinner himself, got into the county court for several barrels of oysters and a noble cod's head and shoulders sent by him to his uncle, the baronet; a "refresher," he said, in legal phrase, to Mrs. Doyly Skinner, his wife, and over which "refresher" Sir Simon chuckled, enjoyed them thoroughly, but made Doyly no return of any kind for his, to him, ruinous presents; then Sir Simon's married niece, Mrs. Carny Bristled, wove comforters and socks—her husband was in the wool trade—and worked him slippers, and made him flannel shirts, and wrote him long, weak, verbose letters; and his cousins sent him game—at least, two, who were sportsmen, and addicted to poaching, at the risk of actions and fights with gamekeepers, sent him hares and pheasants—and one, who was an angler, often forwarded him the finest trout in the stream.

And old Sir Simon accepted all the gifts, and never failed to say with a smile to his two old servants, Peter and Polly Pike, as they unpacked the offerings:

"Sprats to catch herrings! But it won't do. And I'm too old a bird to be caught with chaff," he would add, as he read one of Mrs. Carny's long letters. "Fortune hunters! legacy hunters! every one of them; but they don't know Sir Simon Skinner. They shall, though, before I've done with them!"

One morning old Polly Pike was much shocked to see her master, who was generally a very early riser, and a very hale, ruddy, and stalwart man, come down white, cold, and trembling, at a late hour, into the breakfast-room, and after curtly and crossly answering her rather sulky questions about his health and grumbling lamentations about his looks, she was astounded by an order from Sir Simon to hire two strong char-women from the village to help her to get the whole house in order, as he meant to invite all his relations to spend the Christmas holidays with him.

"I am growing old, Polly Pike," he said, "and I want to know something of these people, for I must select an heir from among them. If I make no will, I suppose my nephew, Doyly Skinner, would be heir at law; and I should like to see if, among them all, I can't do better than that. I shall invite all my kith and kin, Polly Pike, to come here a month before Christmas-day, and on the day after that great festival I shall let them know what my last will and testament will be. So, bustle about. Get everything in order, whatever is wanting to make the house comfortable I will supply. Let Pike make out a list. He can write. I wish you could. Why don't you learn of Pike? He can write and cipher well enough."

"Ah, that he can, Sir Simon! He is a grand scholar; which it never was my luck to get any book-larning. But I've made shift to do without it so far, and won't try after it now."

The secret of Sir Simon's strange resolution was this. One night he had retired to bed very early, feeling at once excited and depressed—chilled, feverish, and very restless.

Polly Pike had not only brought him up to his room a hot bath of mustard and water for his feet, but had warmed his bed, and made him a basin of white wine whey.

When she had left him Sir Simon lay for a long time tossing about on the very bed in which the last of the Lorraines had been found murdered—either by his own hand or that of an assassin—and for some time the thought of that horrible affair shook Sir Simon's hitherto firm nerves and terrified his callous, unbelieving mind.

At length he fell asleep, and a succession of hideous, ghostly dreams haunted those troubled slumbers, when, lo! just as the clock and his mantelpiece struck one, he awoke, with a feeling of horror unutterable.

His hair stood on end; an icy eel seemed to creep up his spine; a cold perspiration came out all over his chilled, trembling body.

He tried to shriek; but his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and his distended eyeballs glared on a shadowy form that stood in the stream of moonlight that just then entered at the window and flooded the room.

In that flood of moonlight stood a ghostly figure. There was a hideous gash across the throat of this spectral-like form, and its white shroud was blotted with dark blood-stains.

At the same time, a cold wind, smelling of a sepulchre, rushed past Sir Simon, and a weird, unearthly voice said:

"Fool! procrastinating fool! lose no more time! Select your heir; make your will. You may be cut off as I was, without a moment's notice."

"Whom shall I select as my heir?" gasped Sir Simon.

"Summon all your relatives, and then make your selection. But lose no time in doing it. Farewell! You shall see me again!"

Such was the hollow-voiced answer, and another blast of ice-cold wind passed over Sir Simon's frame, and then clouds shrouded the face of the moon, and Cimmerian darkness filled the room, and Sir Simon fell back on his pillow in a dead swoon.

Next morning he seemed, as Polly Pike had remarked, very ill indeed; but in the broad daylight he looked upon what had so impressed him a few hours before as a hideous nightmare.

Still, he felt impelled to act on the advice he had received, even if it had been conveyed in a dream, and hence his orders to Mrs. Pike, and the letters he at once wrote to invite all his relatives to Skinner House; and all Sir Simon's relatives accepted the invitation.

Doyly Skinner, with his lean wife—a sad scold—his two grown-up daughters, then two hobbledehoys, and the pride, glory, and torment of their poverty-stricken chambers in Lincoln's-inn, Castor and Pollux, twins of six months old, the last pledges of the bitter love of Mrs. Doyly Skinner to the grimly grained papa, and certainly two very fat, fine, thriving babies.

With the Doyly Skinners, and sole nurse to the twins, who were brought up by hand, came an unacknowledged, very poor relative of Mrs. Doyly's, called Lucy Lovemore—a very pretty, meek, enduring young creature, who, slender, and not over strong, and cruelly scolded, insulted, and put upon by Mrs. Doyly Skinner, still did her duty nobly by Castor and Pollux, and carried the fat twins about the gloomy grounds, or whirled them up and down the avenue in an old, secondhanded perambulator which Doyly had bought of a brother barrister, who had died broken-hearted, leaving a wife and six children unprovided for.

The day after the arrival of the guests, who came late in the evening, cold and tired, the contest began.

Aurora and Esmeralda Skinner, cheaply but showily got up in the Girl-of-the-Period style, sat down to a very old, wiry, broken-winded, grand piano. They thundered away at some interminable duets, and then Aurora shrieked "*Non più mesta*" and "*Sono virgine vezzosa*" to Esmeralda's stunning accompaniments.

The hobbledehoys spouted Latin and Greek, and selections from Shakespeare; and Mrs. Doyly rang for Lucy Lovemore to bring in and show off Castor and Pollux before Sir Simon.

Then Mrs. Carny insisted on measuring his foot for a pair of warm slippers, and Mr. Doyly whispered to his cross, jealous wife, as Sir Simon bowed in acknowledgment of Mrs. Carny's ecstacies at the beauty and smallness of his feet:

"She needn't trouble herself—an old toady!—to take the measure of his feet. She's got that already."

As for the first cousin, Miss Robina Skinner, she was a homœopathist, and laid siege to Sir Simon's heart by globules, which he sneeringly received and pocketed, and threw out of window; and his second cousin, a hydropathist, tormented him incessantly to try the water cure; while the other, who had been a beauty so long ago that no one save herself remembered the fact, sighed, and ogled, and made such fierce love to the old baronet that he took to lonely rambles and long absences from the drawing-room, to keep out of the way of one who had been the belle of Bridgwater in the olden time.

Time passed on. Christmas day was at hand. Aurora and Esmeralda praised the old grand piano to the skies; Doyly studied the history of the Skinner family; the boys tried to say sharp things; the slippers progressed favorably; the globules were regularly offered, openly accepted, and privately destroyed; while Rosalind Nightingale, the ci-devant belle, had forced her photograph on Sir Simon, and added to the gift a long spiral curl, newly cut from her wig.

Every day Lucy Lovemore carried Castor and Pollux in her arms for two hours before breakfast, while all the other ones slept, and wheeled him in the old battered perambulator for two hours more after her own early nursery dinner.

Every day she was scolded, insulted, and outraged by Mrs. Doyly, and told her that she was not worth the salt to her porridge; and every day Mr. Doyly Skinner threatened to dismiss her because she could not do her duty by Castor and Pollux, and get up his shirts, and mend his socks, and dress the girls' hair, and make Mrs. Doyly's caps, and keep the boys clean and tidy.

But about this time it came into the head of Mr. and Mrs. Doyly Skinner that old Sir Simon's choice of heir was actually vibrating between Castor and Pollux, and at this thought they became a little less persecuting and insulting to poor Lucy, in order to make her show off the charms of the twins.

"Let us here, see, and say nothing, ducky," said Mrs. Doyly to her spouse; "but I can see with half an eye what's in Sir Simon's mind. The other day, when I went into the nursery, I found him there, with Castor on his knee, and he had actually a box of barley-sugar in his hand; and Tom tells me that, being up yesterday morning early to try to catch some little birds, he saw Sir Simon go out to meet the twins, and that he took Pollux from Lucy's arms, and carried the blessed beautiful poppet till it came in sight of the house."

"Well," said Doyly, "we must hope it will prove so. I myself, from behind the trees, actually saw the old dotard wheeling the perambulator towards the marshes, with Castor and Pollux in it. Such an old idiot he looked, red as fire, and pleased as Punch! Of course, I'd rather he made me his heir; but as I'm certain he's on his last legs, if that's not to be, the next best thing would be his making one of our children his heir; and if he does, I, of course, should be guardian and trustee, and there'd be a long majority."

"During which we'd live like fighting cocks," said the vulgar Mrs. Doyly.

"Exactly—the fighting included," said Doyly, with a laugh.

Old Sir Simon had had another terrible nightmare, or else a more terrible visit from the weird spectre of the murdered Lorraine.

In this second interview, which closely resembled the first, the ghost of Skinner House urged Sir Simon, in terms full of mystery, but yet not to be misunderstood, to make Doyly Skinner his heir.

This was on Christmas-eve, and on the day after—Christmas-day—Sir Simon had promised his assembled relatives to name his heir.

The dining-hall—a fine old hall, where once a Lorraine had feasted the eighth Henry—was adorned with wreaths of holly, mistletoe, laurestinas, and laurel.

It was a bright frosty morning. Breakfast was spread on a table drawn close to the huge antique hearth, where blazed and crackled the yule log. The breakfast-bell rang, and a merry peal from the village church rang joyfully out.

"Where is Sir Simon?" said Mrs. Doyly. "I made the tea ten minutes ago. It will be as cold as a stone."

"I dare say he's out with Castor and Pollux," said Tom. "He goes out every morning with them, and always carries Castor."

"I thought it was Castor, my love," whispered Mrs. Doyly, triumphantly, to her husband, who replied:

"A minority of twenty years and six months, in that case, my duck."

But at this moment Tom called out loudly:

"Hooray! here they are! Now we can begin, can't we?"

"Good heavens, ma!" cried Aurora, "Sir Simon and Lucy are arm in arm!"

"Why, she's all in white!" screamed Esmeralda.

"In a white wreath and a white veil!" gasped Mrs. Doyly: "and Mary behind, carrying Castor and Pollux!"

"They're married!" groaned Doyly Skinner, turning an apple-green, and sinking back in his chair. "Those are their marriage bells, and my knell."

At this moment Sir Simon entered, leading in pretty, blushing Lucy.

"My dear, disinterested relatives," said Sir Simon, radiant with joy and pride, and in a bran new suit, including a glossy hat and patent leather boots, a white satin waistcoat and blue coat, "I said I would this day name my heir. Here she is—my heir, my bride, my all! Heir, at least pro. tem., of all I possess on earth—a title she will, I know, gladly resign should we in due time boast a Castor and Pollux of our own; but if I am not to be so richly blest, then a Simon or a Lucy will be the heir of Skinner House. And now let me distribute my wedding presents. To you, Nephew Doyly, I give not only the quarto history of the Skinner family, but this button, which I saw hanging by a thread from your coat yesterday, and which you dropped at the foot of my bed last night, when for the second time you played the part of the Lorraine ghost; you know why. Mrs. Doyly Skinner, I present you with the grand piano you and your dear girls have so rapturously extolled. I have ordered a new one for my bride, who plays better to my taste, than any of you. To each of your little children I leave a hundred pounds—not to be spent by you, but to be placed out at compound interest by me till they are of age. And I present the same sum to my niece, Mrs. Carny, and to my cousins first and second, adding, in the case of Miss Rosalind Nightingale, a photograph of my poor face. And now let us sit down to my wedding breakfast. Tom, open that box; it contains my wedding cake. Angel of my life it is your duty to cut it."

Mrs. Doyly Skinner went into strong hysterics, and, gasping out the words, "Old dotard! Artful, designing hussey!" was about to totter out of the room. Mrs. Carny was tearing to pieces a comforter she was knitting, and rose to take her leave.

Sir Simon, standing up, and raising his voice, said, first raising his blushing bride's hand to his lips:

"Once for all, whoever absents him or herself from my wedding breakfast never enters these doors again."

"So low-born a creature!" gasped Mrs. Doyly.

"Your own niece, woman!" said Sir Simon.

"A hired servant!" she retorted.

"More shame for you, cruel tyrant! She should have been as a daughter to you,

But let that pass. Stay or go, as you please: but if you stay, one and all fill your glasses and drink to the health and happiness of Sir Simon and Lady Skinner."

All wisely drank this toast, and under the auspices of the gentle, all-forgiving hostess all remained at Skinner House, and enjoyed "A Merry Christmas."

Saved by a Dream.

BY L. E.

IT IS CHRISTMAS EVE.

The snow is falling thick and fast, clothing the village church and the quaint tombs in the village churchyard, and all the surrounding fields in its white covering.

The little village of Blonk reminds one in every respect of Christmas.

In a neatly-furnished cottage around a cheerful fire sit four persons—Mrs. Addison, her daughter Marie, and her two sons.

At the time we introduce them to the reader the family is maintained by the exertions of Walter (the eldest) who holds the position of village schoolmaster.

The other brother, Reginald, did nothing in the shape of work. He detested it.

There was a rumor abroad that he had dealings with poachers, but he indignantly denied it.

Laura Lovelow, the heiress of Lovelow Grange, was betrothed to his brother Walter, and Reginald, being the brother of her lover, was encouraged in his visits to the Grange by Laura, and he flattered himself that she loved him.

"The very article I require," he mused, "a girl with a fortune."

This had always been his sleeping and waking dream, and at length he gave utterance to it.

"I will tell you a secret, Wal. Laura loves you not, at which, instead of being at all wretched, you should be pleased, for it gives me an opportunity. The loss will not be a very great blow to you, for I know you have your school to fall back upon, while I have no dependence save on the chance of marrying Laura," concluded Reginald coolly.

"Listen, Reignald," said Walter starting to his feet. "If I thought you meant what you said I would thrash you within an inch of your life. How dare you mention Miss Lovelow's name with such intent. Even if she loved you—which I know to be false—I would never see her married to a man without honor and without a heart—one who would only wed her to enrich himself. Besides, with her own sweet lips she has told me she loves me."

"Then I say she told you false," said Reginald.

"Insolent!" exclaimed Walter, passionately; "I will bear it no longer. I will have satisfaction."

Both mother and sister entreated them not to fight.

"Think, my son," she said, with trembling voice, "think what you are about to do, and do not bring sorrow to my grey hairs. Let us entreat you. Reginald is very young."

"Bless you, mother," said the young man, wringing her hand, his voice husky with emotion. "You are right—always right. Reginald, there's my hand."

"I don't want your hand," returned Reginald, doggedly. "You talk about thrashing me within an inch of my life. If you think you can do it you had better set about it."

"No—no, Reggy!" cried Marie. "Why do you wish to aggravate Walter in this way? if what you say is true why not explain it?"

"Well, so I can, only he flew into such a passion about it. Now, you just read that, Marie."

And he handed a letter to his sister.

Marie took the letter and opened it. It ran thus:

"To Mr. Walter Addison: "Sir,—I have heard that you aspire to the hand of my cousin, Miss Lovelow—you, a poor teacher. But I hope what I have heard is false, for you must forget her. Miss Lovelow is engaged to me. I am now on my way to the Grange, and shall arrive there on Christmas Eve. I merely tell you this for you to be out of the way.

"CAPTAIN PERCY DASHWOODE."

"Let me look at the letter," said Walter, excitedly. "I will not believe it."

Marie handed him the letter, but it was too true.

"And yet I cannot think she is false," muttered Walter. "If she is not this fellow shall pay for his insolence. But I will go to Laura, and I will hear from her own lips the truth."

Snatching up his hat he dashed out of the cottage.

"Now, who is wrong?" sneered Reginald, half aloud.

The mother and daughter, with heavy hearts, now retired. But not to rest.

Reginald was now alone, and he gazed into the bright burning fire wrapped in a deep reverie.

At length he gave utterance to his mad thoughts.

"Yes, I was born a gentleman, and I will remain one. The chance offers itself now—this very night. I will take Walter's knife and pocket-book, drop from my window into the garden, then across the fields to Hollow Tree walk, through which he must pass. Walter's knife will do the rest," he said hoarsely. "I will then hide the body in the old hollow tree, and leave the knife and pocket-book on the ground as though it had been dropped by Walter. The captain will soon be found. Walter will be accused, and thus I shall get rid of both my rivals. But I must wait until they are both asleep before I commence my plans."

* * * * * *

The falling snow, driven by the cold wind, blew full in the teeth of a solitary military figure wending its way across the deep snow covered field in the direction of Thurnleigh Wood.

The collar of his cloak is pulled up to protect his face from the sharp driving sleet and the cutting blast.

He now enters a dark avenue, generally known as Hollow Tree Walk. A lonely spot.

The rank trees that grew on either side meet overhead, leaving just sufficient opening for the pelting snow to fall through them.

The traveller now quickens his pace as if wishing to leave the dismal place behind, but he would have sped on the wings of the wind had he caught sight of that dark figure with a gleaming knife in his hand, but he passes on ignorant of his danger.

He knew not that the dark object is fast following on his track.

The howling wind and the deep snow drowns his footsteps, and the figure is gaining rapidly on him. He is now behind him.

The knife is raised—a plunge—the sharp ringing cry of death, and the traveller falls upon the snowy ground never to rise again.

The assassin then rifles the pockets of the murdered soldier, drops the knife and pocket-book, and then drags the body along the snow, and conceals it in the bottom of an old tree, and then disappears.

Morning dawns.

The family have just partaken of breakfast.

Miss Laura Lovelow enters.

All greet her most affectionately.

Suddenly the door is burst open, and the officers of justice hurry into the room.

They produce Walter's knife, now stained with blood, and his pocket-book, and hold them up before his astonished face.

They charge him with the terrible crime of murder. He protests his innocence, but in vain.

Laura and her mother implore the officers to release him.

His sister weeps for mercy.

But appearances are sadly against him, and he is flung into prison as a common murderer.

At length his trial takes place. He is condemned to be hanged.

In the meantime his guilty brother has pressed his suit, but Laura spurns him, and after all his crime he is foiled in his object.

Laura has an interview with Walter, in which she declares her love for him, and her implicit belief in his innocence.

Walter's mother, firm in the belief of her son's innocence, is fast sinking under the heavy blow into the grave, and poor Marie is almost broken-hearted.

At length the day arrives.

The villain Reginald, able to prove his brother's innocence, will not say a word to save his life.

* * * * * *

"Hold! No—no! It was I who did the deed!" exclaimed Reginald, starting up as his brother enters the cottage.

"What do you mean?" said Walter in astonishment at his brother's excited demeanor.

"Then you are not hanged? He is not dead? You have seen him? Tell me—tell me, in pity's sake, if you have seen him!" cried Reginald, in tones of intense suspense and entreaty.

"Seen whom? Have you lost your wits," said Walter.

"Captain Dashwoode!" gasped the terror-stricken brother.

"I have," came the, to Reginald, blissful response.

"Thank heaven!" he murmured. "Then it must have been a dream. But what has it not saved me from?"

"Explain, Reginald."

"I will, Walter, I will. But not now—not now."

His voice became choked with emotion as he affectionately pressed his brother's hand.

"Then I will," returned Walter. "You, I saw the captain, spoke to him, and on hearing of our devoted love for each other, like the noble gentleman he is, he has relinquished his claim to the hand of Laura."

From that day forth Reginald became a changed man, worked hard and assiduously, and when he had attained a high position and a honorable name then, and then only, did he explain to his fond listeners how he had been 'Saved by a Dream."

WEARERS OF WHISKERS.—The subjects of beards furnishes an interesting study as indicating dispositions of persons. There is nothing particularly marked about the characteristics of the "beardless youth," as his purposes in life and his character can hardly be said to be fixed. However, as he grows into manhood, and matures his beard to his taste, the style he finally adopts will usually indicate his ideas of life.

The absence altogether of whiskers and mustache in a man whose character and habits of life have become fixed and unchangeable indicates a frank, open-hearted disposition, with a great regard for the truth and the courage to tell it, with nothing to conceal and a conscientiousness that is as clear and apparent as his clean-shaven face.

He is usually a plain, unpretentious man, who pays more attention to the storing of his mind with useful information and the domestic side of life than the adornment of his person.

The man of iron will and firmness of purpose is he who wears a full, thick, chubby beard.

If he is a man of brass and has had the benefit of cultured experience, although firm in his purposes and unchangeable in his ideas, he will grant your argument if you are reasonable.

But on the other hand, if he is uncultured and inexperienced in business affairs, he will prove to be an uncompromising tyrant uncouth and overbearing in the extreme.

Perhaps the most marked index of character is furnished by what is commonly called Burnsides, and the more of the bare chin that is shown, and the heavier and more pointed the whiskers, the greater is the measure of self-conceit.

High living and a self-consciousness that is utterly oblivious to the importance of his surroundings is the characteristic of the wearer of flowing Burnsides.

He is generally possessed of a fine physic, and prides himself on his shape. He is usually a gourmand, whose appetite is easily offended at something that is not up to his standard of cookery. His greed knows no bounds, and his egotism no compromise.

A plain, unpretentious mustache indicates nothing in particular, and about the only way you can read a man's character from this standpoint is by the manner in which he trains his mustache and the amount of labor he devotes to it. There are some exceptions to the foregoing general rules.

HOT WATER FOR WRINKLES.—A very beautiful, though no longer youthful, society woman owes the preservation of her charms to a little habit she has of lying down when dressed for the evening with a cloth wrung out of hot water pressed closely over the entire surface of her face, and allowing it to remain there half an hour. All the wrinkles are, she claims, smoothed out of her face by this process, which is in striking contrast to the way the average woman flies into clothes for an evening's outing, hurries the crimp all out of her hair while the carriage waits, covers her hot, tired face with polka dots of powder in her haste, tugs on her gloves and is off.

THE recent revelations regarding marriages made through matrimonial agencies are bringing out some funny stories. One is of an elderly man who was weary of the iron domestic rule of his three grown-up daughters, and so advertised for a wife in a local paper. He received three replies—one from each of the daughters.

PARTY is the madness of many for the gain of the few.

Scientific and Useful.

ON THE CLOUDS.—A western inventor is endeavoring to interest capital in his electrical magic lantern for casting or reflecting advertisements on the dark clouds that often hang low over a city. The inventor claims to have secured contracts from several well-known firms for displaying their cards in this manner. "If the idea is fully developed," observes a contemporary, "we may expect to see some very startling and grotesque effects."

COLDS.—It may not be as widely known as it deserves to be (writes a correspondent of the British Medical Journal) that twenty grains of salicylic acid, given in liq. ammon. acet. three or four times a day, will so far control a common cold that the aching of the brow, eyelids, etc., will cease in a few hours, while the sneezing and running from the nose will also abate and will disappear in a few days, and, more fortunate still, the cold will pass off and not finish up, as is customary, with a cough.

ARTIFICIAL MUSIC.—An ingenious instrument has been invented aptly styled the piano-player. It may be attached to any piano, and by its means any piece of music is effectively rendered by simply putting on a perforated disc, and turning a handle. It is not merely a mechanical instrument, as the time and expression of the music are within the control of the player. This really remarkable invention is a valuable acquisition to every home, dancing parties, on board yachts, and, in fact, in every quarter where there is the absence of a proficient pianoforte-player.

AUTOMATISM.—A new development of the automatic principle so successfully applied to the machines which supply the public with post cards, chocolate, and cigars at railway stations, is an automatic gas-meter. One of these is placed in a house, and when the occupant wishes light he drops a penny into a slot. By an ingenious arrangement the weight of the penny forces a certain number of cubic feet of gas—just a pennyworth—into the pipes, which the tenant can use at will. Once a week the collector of the gas company calls, and takes the pennies out of the locked receptacle into which they drop.

Farm and Garden.

THE LAND.—Too much land means taxes on that from which only partial crops can be obtained. It is the small plots, well manured, that yield the profitable crops. It is more expensive to attempt to secure large yields from a tract requiring a portion of the time to be lost in traveling over it than to concentrate all the labor on a small area.

STRAW.—Rye straw, unbroken, sells better in market than that which is broken; but for bedding, on the farm, it is better to cut it, as it can then be easier handled when added to the manure heap. The fineness of all material entering into the manure heap is important, as it promotes more rapid decomposition and saves labor in handling the manure in the spring.

AT THE HEAD.—In England the Dorking fowl stands at the head. It is one of the best table breeds known. In this country the Dorking is tender when young, but hardy when matured. The hens make good layers and mothers, and the males are superior to all other kinds for capons. Crossed with Asiatic breeds the result is a very superior bird for practical purposes.

BUTTER.—There is often complaint that butter put up in wooden packages has a woody flavor, especially where it comes in contact with the wood. This is because the tubs are not properly soaked and scalded before they are used. They should be thoroughly soaked and scalded, and if the scalding is not in brine the inside should be well rubbed with dairy salt, so that the wood will not draw the salt from the butter and injure it in this way.

GOATS.—Goats can be kept where even the sheep cannot exist. The goat should find a ready sale in market, as its flesh is equal in every respect to that of the sheep in flavor and quality, and meat from goats can be produced at less cost than from any other animal in sections where the range is wide, or where lands are not cultivated. They are difficult to restrain, however, and damage orchards, which are serious objections, but under proper conditions goats may be made profitable.

ALL is not lost when anything goes contrary to you.

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TO OUR FRIENDS.

THE POST earnestly hopes that those of its friends and readers who are kindly in the habit of getting up clubs, will enter the field as soon as possible this year and try at least to double their old lists, and that such of our readers as have not heretofore sent us a club will try to do so now.

We intend getting a great many additional clubs this year, and trust every one of our present subscribers will make an extra effort to secure one or more new friends for us.

THE POST is much lower in price than any other first-class family paper in the country, and we think it only needs to be laid before the community to be subscribed for at once by thousands to whom it may still be a stranger, save, perhaps, by reputation.

Of course we must depend in a great degree upon our present subscribers, friends and readers to show THE POST to their acquaintances and neighbors, and to speak a good word in our behalf. Their return for such efforts must be the pleasure they give to others, the consciousness of assisting in the good work of circulating THE POST, and enabling us to make it better, more useful and entertaining than ever before. Will they try and do it for us? Let each of our present friends and subscribers try to get one new subscriber at least.

Send us the names and addresses of your friends and neighbors and we will mail them sample copies immediately upon their receipt.

A PREMIUM TO SUBSCRIBERS.

THE POST will send as a premium to every person who sends us $2 00 for one year's subscription in advance, either the magnificent picture of "CHRIST BEFORE PILATE," which we have described in former issues, or the two splendid companion photo-gravures "IN LOVE" and "THE PEACEMAKER." They are printed on heavy-toned paper, and are in size 12 x 16 inches each. The subject of the first named "In Love" represents a young couple dressed in the fashion of our grandfathers and grandmothers, sitting under a tree in the garden of an old-time mansion. The maiden is sewing and the lover after the style of the period, is paying her most courteous attention. Everything in the work is full of life and beauty. In the second picture, "The Peacemaker," the couple have plainly had a quarrel. Both pretend to want to part, and at the same time both are evidently glad of the kind offices of a young lady friend who has just come upon the scene, and wishes to have them "make it up." Each picture tells its own story completely, and each is the sequel and complement of the other. Prettier works of art or neater pictures for the ornamentation of a parlor or sitting-room, never came from the hands of an artist.

Remember we send either "Christ Before Pilate," or the Two Splendid Companion Photo-gravures "In Love" and "The Peacemaker," all postage paid to each subscriber who sends us $2 00 for THE POST one year.

THERE is no house so small that it has no room for love; there is no castle so large that it cannot be filled with it.

Another Christmas.

Christmas has come round again to all, including THE POST and its readers, and we earnestly hope that its coming finds even more happy hearts and bright faces than it did one year ago.

We rejoice to see that with the passing of time the glorious season becomes a period of greater open-heartedness, general celebration and all charitableness. And nothing could so convincingly show that His precept, whose birth first established the holy festival, is sinking deeper into the heart of universal man than this annual increase in the true observation of the true spirit of the day.

It is a favorite theme with many croakers, who would shut out the sunshine of life if they could and live only in the cheerless shadows, that the world is getting worse as it grows older. Such a belief at once stamps them as either unable or unwilling to do it justice.

It is no doubt true that in the contest for riches, for place, and for honors, men now-a-days jostle each other as they never did before; but that is simply because a better age gives us all a better chance. If there was less of contention one hundred or five hundred years since, it was because men were then hopeless of success, and wanting in ambition; because they were not permitted to enter into competition for the great prizes of humanity. Some were men born masters and others servants, and so many were kept down with the strong arm of power and denied a fair share in earth's joys and blessings. And out of this position of superior and menial grew the lack of struggling among the multitude which made those times on the surface more apparently peaceful than the present.

But, as have said, the world grew wiser and better. Broader notions of manhood planted themselves in the bosoms of the nations. Christianity became less theoretical and more practical. Freedom and equality took on a new meaning; and when the lowliest and poorest born saw there was nothing in his state or birthright to prevent his fighting for a place among the highest, richest and best, what was more natural than that from the time in which such ideas came to the light the world would see more bustle and contention among men than of old!

In the same way the world has grown wider and nobler in its general and thorough celebration of Christmas. In other days the real enjoyment of the day was confined to comparatively few; but now, such is the big heart of progress, wealth, joy and charity beating in the world, there are none to whom its coming—apart from the inevitable dispensations of God—is not in some degree a source of happiness. And THE POST hopes that every one of its readers may in the coming festival enjoy the very happiest and merriest Christmas they have ever yet known.

THOSE who have just set out in pursuit of truth are apt to think so much of their first discoveries as to imagine that anything further is hardly to be expected; but if they proceed they find it is with them as with travelers on an outward road: no new stage is to be reached but by a relinquishment of the former; and that, from the beginning to the end of the journey, they ought to take "Onward" for their motto.

THOSE generosity rises above the ordinary rules of social conduct and flows with much too full a stream to be comprehended within the precise marks of formal precepts. It sanctifies every passion, and adds grace to every acquisition of the soul; and if it does not necessarily include at least it reflects a lustre upon the whole circle of moral and intellectual qualities.

THE family is the very core of all society, and those who do not learn its lessons and taste its joys are but very imperfectly prepared for the outer life which they imagine to be so much broader and fuller.

"DON'T shiver for last year's snow," a saying of Archbishop Whately's, is peculiarly applicable to those who make themselves miserable over troubles that are past.

IT is no test of amiability to be good-natured in the few and rare moments of serenity when all human troubles seem to have subsided. It is the man who, when troubled himself, can preserve a calm and cheerful exterior to cheer those around him; who, when oppressed by cares, has yet an encouraging word for his brother; who, when disappointed himself, has yet the disposition to point out to others the star of hope in their horizon, who may be most confidently described as a really amiable man.

TO be true men and women we must be self-poised, self directing, self respecting. We must never hang our opinions upon another's thought or a party's dictum; we must never indolently shift responsibility or sink into mental captivity to a stronger nature. The most modest of us all, however lightly he may hold his own powers, must remember that they are his own, and on that account are of priceless value to him.

ALL to whom want is terrible, upon whatever principle, ought to think themselves obliged to learn the sage maxims of our parsimonious ancestors, and attain the salutary art of contracting expenses, for without economy none can be rich, and with it few can be poor.

SLANDERERS will sooner discover many spots on the garments of others than one on their own; but the cruel disposition they indulge generally produces its own punishment by drawing the scrutinizing eyes of others upon themselves, and exposing their many faults.

WE may laugh or weep at the madness of mankind; we have no right to vilify them for our own sake or theirs. Misanthropy is not the disgust of the mind at human nature, but with itself; for it is laying its own exaggerated vices as blots at the door of others.

JUST as well you might expect sentiments of justice from a gamester as look for noble principles in the man whose hopes and fears are all suspended on the present moment, and who stakes his whole happiness on the events of this life.

DO not begin to quarrel with the world too soon; for, bad as it may be, it is the best we have to live in here. If railing would have made it better, it would have been reformed long ago. The worst fault it has is want of charity.

CALMNESS is the most abundant origin of all that is keen and deep in the movements of the mind. It is the essence of judgment, the author of penetration, the substitute of invention.

TO have a clear and possible Ideal Self, as our mental mirror, is a great gain to most souls, and a precious aid to self-respect and a right line of life.

HE is happy whose circumstances suit his temper; but he is more excellent who can suit his temper to his circumstances.

IT is in vain to regret a misfortune when it is past retrieving; but few have strength enough to practice this philosophy.

ONLY by slow and painful degrees can we fight our way upward and break loose from the clinging hold of self love.

SLEEP is Death's youngest brother, and so like him that I never dare trust him without my prayers.

IT is the gold—character; it is genuine all the way through, and not washed over the surface merely.

THE thing which an active mind most needs is a purpose and a direction worthy of its activity.

Go half-way to meet a man, and he will go twice that distance with you without a word.

HEAR both sides and you will be clear; hear but one and you will still be in the dark.

SPEAK little and to the purpose, and you will pass for somebody.

The World's Happenings.

For a recent baby show in Melbourne, Australia, there were no less than 700 entries.

New York's baby hippotamus was to have the alliterative name of "McGlaty Murphy."

Minnows two inches long are said to have been taken from a 74-foot well at New Iberia, Louisiana.

A farmer in Salem county, N. J., got on the road to the meadow with his hay wagon before he discovered it was Sunday.

A custodian at the Paris exhibition named Gautois, decorated with 14 medals for lives saved, died the other day at the age of 66.

An auctioneer at Bath, Me., disgusted at the low price offered for his goods, sarcastically put up a $5 bill which was promptly bid off at $4.90.

Of late years the number of women entering the professions of painting and sculpture has enormously increased in France, Germany and Russia.

Jimmie McPhansteel, a 4-year-old son of R. C. McPhansteel, of Greenville, Texas, while playing, accidentally bit his tongue and bled to death.

A Long Branch, N. J. man, after eating half a rabbit on a wager, ate 48 raw clams, a dozen fried oysters and a pumpkin pie. He suffered no ill effects.

A Wheeling, W. Va. man who recently moved from one house to another found in a closet of his new residence a coat with $35 in a roll in the inside pocket.

Ohio's fat woman is dead. She lived in Pike county, and in health weighed 600 pounds. Her coffin, which was carried by 16 men, measured three feet in depth, and nearly four in width.

London dailies record that recently on the same night two lions in different menageries attacked their tamers. One man had three fingers bitten off, and the other was lacerated about the body.

The big dog he was fondling in his arms saved the life of a gunner at Pittsburg by intercepting a stray bullet which would have entered the man's body had not the dog received it. The animal was killed instantly.

New Zealand, has been agitated by the advent of a missionary who describes himself as "a converted athlete," and the brother of J. L. Sullivan, the prize-fighter. He has occupied all the pulpits in the town and drawn immense congregations.

About two months ago a Clare county, Mich. woman started for Tennessee, taking her dog along. She lost him in Cincinnati, and a few days ago he made his appearance at his old home in Michigan, thin and travel-worn, but very glad to get back.

A young man of Warsaw ordered a dress suit from a tailor, who agreed to deliver it on a certain day. Because of the failure of the tailor to send it he could not go, but his rival went, proposed and was accepted, and the plaintiff now wants damages.

Elder William Harris, a licensed Baptist preacher, who had been blind since infancy, died recently in the New London Poorhouse, after three years spent therein, at the age of 86 years. He was never ordained, because he could not see to give the rite of baptism.

Over 1000 rodents suffered death as the result of a rat hunting match that took place in Cardington, Ohio. The hunters were divided into teams, and the losing team treated all hands to an oyster supper. Over 900 of the rodents were captured by the winning team.

Tax stamps have been established in Switzerland to enable the poorer classes to pay their taxes in small instalments, instead of handing out a lump sum. The taxpayer can buy weekly a few 25 or 50 centime stamps, and so gradually clear off his debt to the Government.

Some one sent a Missouri church deacon a postal card advising him not to pray so loud, and not to attempt to sing at all, and he just backslid and licked three of his neighbors inside of a week. No man can pray too loud for his own good or the benefit of the general public.

Has a man a right to kiss his wife in a theatre? That is the burning question of the hour in Kansas City, where the authorities have decided in the negative. Dr. A. M. Goldstein and his wife prepared a test case, and after some controversy were escorted outside by a policeman.

The President is fond of driving a high-bred bay Kentucky horse to a mail wagon. He holds the reins and Mrs. Harrison snugs up to him and chats away just like women who are not Presidents' wives, and the President seems to be an excellent listener for it is not observed that he talks back.

An official of the Ohio Penitentiary has received a letter from a former inmate, who was pardoned in 1867 after serving 24 years in which he expresses regrets that he ever left the institution. He's without a home or friends. He says he can get into an almshouse, but that he prefers death to going there.

The King of Siam, in everyday life, is only a common plug of a man, going round with feathers on his coat and his hat cared in, but now and then, when he wants to sing on style, he ties $1,000,000 worth of jewels on his robes and ascends his throne with a tread which makes his whole kingdom shake.

A big tomcat, which had been a pet at the home of William Blair, in New York, had a fit recently, and made a spring at Mrs. Blair when she tried to drive it out of a bed-room. She put up her apron to shield her face, and the cat bit her on the arm. After flinging the animal against the wall, Mrs. Blair shut it in the room and summoned a policeman, who shot the cat.

A merchant in Binghamton, N. Y., saw a strange combat. He heard a squeaking noise under one of his shelves and a moment later there rolled out three gray rats engaged in a pugilistic encounter. They clawed and bit at each other savagely and were so much absorbed in the fight that they paid no attention to the lookers on. A cat walked leisurely up and also stood by watching the row. After a few minutes the rodents realized their position, broke away and scampered off into holes.

CHILDREN'S VOICES.

BY H. J. B.

Children's voices! Children's voices!
Bringing back the careless day,
When my giddy brain was busy
Only with my toys and play.

Children's voices, children's voices,
Hark the shout as from the school
Boys are tearing with the daring
Born of freedom's joconnd rule!

Children's voices, children's voices,
Blent in choral hymn of praise,
How they lift us, how they sift us
From the dust of failing days!

Children's voices, children's voices,
Strain so tender, sweet and true,
Lark and linnet may begin it,—
Angels, only, sing it through.

My Holidays.

BY E. G. N.

"PLEASE, sir, missus says what will you have for dinner?"

I looked up from my writing at the trim country girl who spoke.

"Tell her, anythin she likes to send," was my answer, and from Jane's face it appeared that my reply was more puzzling than she had anticipated.

This interruption to my train of though caused me to lay aside my pen, and go to the window. It was a sweet country prospect I saw, a gay piece of garden, then a rural road, and beyond the green fields and stately trees, which betokened that I was many miles from the city.

I gave a sigh of relief at finding myself away from the noise and toil and multitude of the large city. This was my first day of holiday, and unlike most city men, who rush to gay watering-places or gayer towns, I had come to bury myself in the quietude of a country life.

To me, nature and solitude were two great restorers of my overtaxed brain and strength; I had tried them often with success; and now, for the second time, found myself under their influence in the quaint village of Marley.

I had taken the same lodgings which I had occupied the previous year, partly because I felt at home in them, and partly because the landlady was a woman of few words and fewer ideas.

None troubled themselves about me in Marley, and I troubled myself about no one. All I wanted was quiet, and country sights and sounds, and those I got.

If I had had a wife or sister, things might have been different; but I was a bachelor, and my only sister had married into a higher sphere than her own, and her associates ill accorded with my feelings. The house was semi-detached, but as the next-door neighbors consisted only of two maiden lodgers and a deaf old landlady, there was not much chance of their incommoding me.

I had a pleasant sitting-room, with a large bay window looking to the front of the house, and a bed-room upstairs which commanded a view of the meadows, where there were generally cows and horses, ducks and fowls, and other curious sights. My leisure time was occupied in literature, for I was beginning to be a known writer in some of the magazines.

"Please, sir, the missus says the butcher ain't a-coming to-day, and will poached eggs and bacon do?"

I turned from the window and replied:

"Anything she likes will do as long as there is enough of it. Tell your mistress not to send up again, as I don't want to be interrupted."

So the maid went down to her own domain. She was a clean, strong, bright-looking girl; I suppose the sight of her face caused me to fall into a reverie about womankind in general—at all events, I did so.

I despised all women; they were often pretty and fascinating, but shallow, vain, and heartless. There was not a woman I knew, who, if temptation came to her, would not destroy her husband's peace of mind for the sake of out-vying her neighbors, nor a girl who would not break her lover's heart (if it were breakable) for the sake of an additional triumph of her beauty.

In olden times there had been wives and mothers worthy of their names; now the woman-world seemed mad for admiration, show, and conquest.

In my boyish days I had been a worshipper of the fair sex, but I had seen enough of their foibles now to despise them.

From my window I could see almost into the bay window of the next house. Everything there was old, and faded, and shabby; the door-steps were neither clean nor dry; the garden was a wilderness of weeds and flowers and rank grass; the windows were dusty, and the curtains old and dirty.

I could see, too, that the carpet was almost worn out, and the furniture was all tumble-down and miserable-looking. I pitied the poor old deaf woman who owned the place, and I pitied more the two maiden ladies who could make such a house their home.

I had seen them occasionally during my visit last year, but they seldom opened their window, and never sat near it, so that the only glimpse I had of them was on their way to or from the village post-office.

I was not in my regular working order yet, so after this reverie I got my hat and went out for a ramble. Everything was bright and fresh, and every living thing bursting with sounds of joyousness, from the buzzing fly to the shouting noisy lad.

Down the lanes I went, on and on, until I was alone with the sky and flowers, the grass, and larks, and insects; then I sat down to think, and my thoughts ran into so many and various channels, that they became feelings instead of ideas.

As I said before, nature and solitude are two great restorers; they are also our two best and greatest teachers. The man who gains no new ideas or sensations from them must have sadly lost the image in which he was made.

When I had had enough of my own reflections I strolled back to my eggs and bacon, and after eating them I read the newspapers, and then I wrote for several hours, until tea was brought; and so my first day came to an end.

Many days like it followed, and much rest and satisfaction came to me from them. Now and then I took the train, and spent a day in the neighborhood, exploring the objects of interest on all sides.

One morning, on going to my window, to observe whether the heavy clouds were likely to break, I saw, to my surprise, a little boy, hastily pulling up weeds from the path in the neighboring garden. I looked at the next window; the dirty curtains were gone, the old table, which had been laden with musty books, was polished up, and instead of books, now flourished a gay geranium.

There were cobwebs still in the corners of the windows, but while I was looking at them a long brush came and swept them quickly away, the window was thrown up, and I saw that the next door had a new inhabitant. More than that, she was a woman, but whether young I could not see, for as soon as she noticed me she retreated into the room.

I hate gossip; I would scorn to ask a question about my neighbors, as much as I dislike them to ask about me; still I was sorry this lady had come into such a desolate house and among such old desolate people.

Unfortunately I had managed to sprain my ankle, and this obliged me to remain in-doors for some days. I sat near the window that I might enjoy the air and the view, and so it came to pass that in my idle moments I could not help seeing into the next house.

By degrees the windows were cleaned, fresh curtains put up, a new piece of drugget laid down, plants put in the windows; then the rank grass in the garden was cut, the luxuriant flowers were tied up, the weeds were removed, and soon the place looked almost cheerful in its trimness. All this was done or superintended by the new lady; she was young and fair, her fingers seemed able to do anything, and she had brought new life into the old desolate place.

The deaf landlady furbished up her steps, and came out in a new and wonderful cap. The two maiden ladies seemed to have vanished. Altogether the next door was becoming a place to wonder over.

If I had not hated gossip, perhaps I should have asked Jane what all this meant. I only despised myself for noticing the changes, and yet wanted to know what was to be the next step. This I soon saw.

A bird was hung up in the window, above the plants, a sofa wheeled into the bay, an easel placed upon the table; and there, day after day, the lady would sit, poring over her painting, while on the sofa I could see two slippered feet, evidently belonging to a gentleman.

The lady often went down the village to the post-office; oftener still, busied herself in the garden; but she was seldom long away from the sofa, on which the slippered feet were always resting.

Was she vain, and shallow, and heartless? What was her name? Where did she come from? What was she doing there? Who was the gentleman?

All these questions I caught myself asking myself; and then I would take up my hat and go to my two great teachers, to help me finish my magazine article, and would forget about the young lady and her nimble fingers till I saw her hard at work again.

One night I could not sleep. Towards morning I got up to bathe my head in cold water; but even that did not cause me to rest.

Day broke, and found me still awake; and when the larks began to sing I got up and opened my window. After a time I thought I would fetch a book, and, going down stairs for that purpose, I went into my sitting-room, and drew up the blind. I was not a little surprised to see my next-door neighbor already at work in her garden, and from that time I called her in my own mind "Sunrise," for want of a better name.

Sunrise she seemed, in that shabby, dirty house, and sunrise no doubt she was to the eyes who were so often gazing at her from the sofa; and from that morning she became "Sunrise" to me; and, considering that her real name was unknown to me, I do not know that I could have made a more appropriate choice.

Whether Sunrise was pretty or not, I could not tell; she always sat with her back to my window, and gardened in a large sun-bonnet, so that her face was not familiar to me; but I knew she had pretty, fair hair, and a pretty head and shoulders.

I was confined to the house for nearly a week with my ankle; and during this time, when I was not writing, I was amusing myself with watching my neighbors. Sometimes I was almost inclined to relent in my sweeping assertion that all women were heartless, and make an exception in favor of Sunrise; but then the thought would cross my mind that she was out of the world, and therefore free from temptation.

Day after day she would be seated at her easel; but sometimes, when her window and mine were both open, I could hear the gentleman's voice reading to her, and occasionally I distinguished here, making comments, I suppose.

Certainly this individual must be a happy man to be so waited upon and cared for. Supposing I were ill, who would do the same for me? and I was forced to own with humiliation—nobody.

I augured, from Sunrise's dress and from their mode of life, that they were poor, and yet there was that in her manner and bearing which showed that they were gentlefolks.

In Sunrise's face, too, there were lines of thought, or rather, I should say, there was a sober gravity, which told of sadness and of battles fought and won.

My neighbors had been in more than a month, and I knew no more about them than on their arrival. I was putting together my manuscripts one day when I heard steps on the gravel path, and then a voice saying:

"Lady, do buy—this nice heliotrope or a lovely rose-tree. Lady, do buy."

I listened, and another voice replied:

"Not to-day, thank you, good woman."

I went nearer to the window, that I might see without being seen. The woman was standing in the next garden with a basket of plants on her head, and Sunrise was talking to her from the open bay window.

"Indeed I don't want any to day," she said. "I shall be ruined if I buy so many plants."

"Sure, and a kind act never ruined a lady yet," said the woman. "It'll be a real kindness if you buy one. Do, my lady, do buy."

I saw the wistful look which Sunrise gave the plants as she shook her fair head.

"Indeed I can't afford it," she said.

"But, lady," persisted the woman; "I'm tired and hungry, and I want to take something home to my children."

I could not hear what followed, but presently Sunrise came to the door, then the woman set down her basket on the gravel path and went into the house.

I waited till she came out again, which was perhaps a quarter of an hour; when she had hoisted her basket on her head and was going off, I got my hat and followed her. I walked behind her for some distance, till we were quite out of sight of any houses, and then I came up to her.

"My good woman," said I, "I want one of your plants."

She took the basket from her head and put it on the ground.

"You don't seem to have sold many," I remarked.

"But two this day, sir," she replied, despairingly.

"You must be fatigued with carrying this heavy basket in the heat," I said.

"Sure, and it's well-nigh ready to drop I am," she replied. "But for a kind lady up the village, I don't know how I'd be getting along."

"Indeed!" said I; "and what did she do for you?"

"Took me inside her house and made me rest awhile," said the woman; "gave me a good meal, looked me out some clothes, and spoke words as did my heart good to hear."

"Did she not buy your plants?" I asked.

"No, sir," she replied; "she'd not the money to throw away on 'em, much as she wanted to have 'em; she told me she was poor, and what money she got she wanted for the sick gentleman."

"Her husband, I suppose?" I said.

"Well, 'twas her husband or her father, I expect," was the reply; "but which of the plants will you be pleased to buy?"

I selected one, and giving her the sum she asked, I got a boy to carry it home, and followed him, pondering about Sunrise and her history.

Two or three days after this, Jane opened my drawing-room door, saying:

"The lady from next door, if you please sir."

As may be imagined, I was immensely surprised. What did she want? and why did she come to me?

I put aside my pen, and rose to place her a chair; for a moment she looked embarrassed, but quickly recovering her self-possession, she bowed and half smiled as she said:

"Pardon my intrusion; I am come to ask of you a favor."

"Pray be seated, madam," said I; "what can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

She glanced at the chair I had placed for her, but remained standing.

"I am painting a flower-piece," she replied; "and unfortunately, by an accident, the flower I was copying has been destroyed; I am come to ask if you will be so kind as to lend me the plant you have in your window, which is like it. I am sure I don't know how to apologise enough for coming to you."

"No apology is necessary," I said; "I am happy to be able to do anything for you; pray keep the plant, and do as you will with it."

"Thank you, you are very kind," she said, "but not kinder than I thought you would be," she added, while a gleam shot into her eyes.

Now, why should she think me kind? and why did she smile at me as if we were old acquaintances?

"I would not have come to you," she continued, "if I could have procured elsewhere a flower which would have answered my purpose; but I am obliged to finish my painting by a certain day, and my time is short."

"You are painting, then, I suppose, for an Exhibition?" I remarked.

"Yes, and I must send the picture to the city in a fortnight," she replied. "I am very much obliged to you for your kindness, and James will be too."

"May I ask to whom I am indebted for this visit?" I inquired.

"My name is Prosser," she replied, smilingly. "Yours, I know, is Bailey."

She bowed and moved towards the door, but came back a step and held out her hand.

"Thank you so much," she said. "Good-bye."

I took the plant and accompanied her to her own door; then I came back to look up my desk and go for a ramble. During my walk I was thinking of my visitor; no one could call her beautiful. She had a young, pleasant face, with bright soft eyes, and a gentle voice. Was she vain, and shallow, and heartless?

Who was James? Was he her husband? Certainly he was not her father. She must be a clever girl to paint for Exhibitions; something different from the ordinary run of girls, for she must have some ideas beyond show and dress and admiration.

It pleased me, when I returned from my walk, to see my plant on the table before Sunrise, and to know that her eyes were studying it, and that James was gazing on it and her, probably with approbation, for I could see his slippered feet upon the sofa.

I knew now that his name was James

Prosser. And what was here? Was she his wife or sister? She was still Sunrise to me.

My holidays drew to an end. I left Marley and the Prossers and went back to my ledgers and city life, and almost forgot them in my everyday business.

It was said by some people that my magazine articles had never been as good as those I wrote during the summer holidays.

I was sitting before a glorious fire after the fatigues of the day. I had just finished reading my last article in print, and the tea was brewing.

It wanted ten days to Christmas. I remembered the time when Christmas had been very happy to me, but that was long ago, when I was a boy; now I had no relatives to be happy with, for my sister always went down to spend that day with her husband's family.

I was alone in the world; and saving that Christmas Day told its own story to me every year with fresh hope and beauty, it made no difference to my life. I poured out my tea, and, stirring my sugar round, fell to thinking.

Christmas should be happy to every one. But what is happiness? how do we get it? I knew well enough that true happiness comes from making others happy. Whom did I make happy?

Now and then a crossing-sweeper by the gift of a few pennies—no one else. Would it not be good to begin this Christmas by doing something more? But how? and where? Whose heart could I make glad?

Suddenly, as I sipped my tea, the vision of a pleasant face rose before me. For a moment I did not remember to whom it belonged; but it soon flashed across my mind that it was Sunrise. I would do something for her; the question was, what? Were they still at Marley? and how was I to set about it?

All tea-time I was amused with thinking over my new scheme, and by the time I had finished, my plans were laid. I would go down to Marley for Christmas; it was years since I had seen the trees in their feathery frost costume, years since I had seen acres of level snow; having gone to Marley, I would send Sunrise such a hamper as her eyes had never yet beheld.

Forthwith I wrote to engage my rooms for the twenty-third of December, and then fell to thinking of the surprise I should give Sunrise.

I determined she should not know who sent the present, and I also determined I would do my best to see the issue. I was somewhat puzzled about the direction for the hamper.

Was she Mrs. or Miss Prosser? To avoid mistakes, I settled to put "James Prosser, Esq.," and having decided these preliminaries, I retired to dream over them.

My experience of Christmas is that it is generally mild, damp, and green; but the year I am speaking of proved an exception; it was bitterly cold, and as I arrived at my lodgings on the evening of the twenty-third, the snow was beginning to fall in large flakes.

I made myself as comfortable as I could that night, and the next morning I went to my window tolerably early to inspect my neighbors' premises. The snow had fallen thick for many hours, but it had ceased now, and I could see into the bay window.

The bird was hanging up, the white curtains had been replaced by red ones, the table stood in its old position, so did the sofa, but there were no signs of the Prossers.

While I was looking, I saw the sofa moved round towards the fire, and then the skirt of a dress brushed past; presently the slippered feet appeared, but only for a moment, and I saw instead the head and shoulders which appertained to them. From their position I understood that Mr. Prosser was able to sit up now. Then Sunrise came to fetch her bird, and I had a good view of her pleasant face. I was very glad I had thought of doing anything to please her.

After breakfast I sallied forth to walk three miles into the neighboring town. I was well repaid for my trouble; the roads were almost impassable in some places from the heavy drifts, but the extreme beauty of the smooth, wave-like tiers of snow I had never seen equalled.

The trees and hedges were like crystallized silver, the whole earth was a giant fairyland. It was worth taking some trouble to see such a lovely sight.

When I reached the town I went to the poulterer's, and bought a turkey and some sausages; then I bought new-laid eggs, a ham, a sponge-cake, some port wine, apples, oranges, preserves, etc.

Having ordered all these things to be sent to the same shop, I had them packed in a hamper.

"Where shall I send them, sir?" asked the man, as he was tying the hamper up.

"Send them by to-day's carrier to Marley; address them 'James Prosser, Esq., Marley. Carriage paid.' And now, what have I to pay?"

That being settled, I waited to see the direction properly fastened on, and then retraced my steps. I knew enough of the country ways to be able to guess with tolerable accuracy that the package would arrive about three o'clock, and by that hour I should have got home, and be in a position to see the result.

Everything worked well. I reached home in time for my mid-day meal, and then drew my easy chair so that I could see into my neighbors' room without being seen by them.

By-and-by the heavy carrier's cart stopped at their gate, and after sundry cogitations the hamper was delivered. I waited some time; then I saw Sunrise come to the window to catch the waning light upon the card of address.

I saw her lips move, and I knew she was reading what was written on it; then she turned to James, and I heard a merry laugh.

After a time I saw they had dragged the hamper nearer the light, and Sunrise was on her knees unpacking it; it did me good to see her face as she handed the things to James; I felt very happy in having made her happy.

I ate my Christmas dinner alone, yet I was not lonely, for I knew in the next house there was mirth and enjoyment. The twilight was falling, and I was waiting for candles, when Jane appeared, bringing me a slip of twisted paper.

"This has come from next door, sir," she said.

Surely they had not found me out! I opened it, and read:

"We saw you at the window, and want you to come in to tea with us to-night, as soon as you can. J. P."

No beginning and no ending to the note; no "kind regards" or "compliments," but just a quaint little scrap. Who was "J. P?"

The hand-writing was neat, irregular, and firm. Was it his or hers? To solve the question, I answered the note in person.

Sunrise was looking for me, and answered the door herself. She gave me a glad welcome, and I followed her into the room, and was introduced to James. He rose to greet me, and I saw he was able to walk now. He was a fine, handsome man, in spite of the traces his illness had left upon him.

"If it had not been for your note," I said, turning to Mr Prosser, "I should have spent to-night alone."

Sunrise smiled, and he answered:

"It was Janet's thought, not mine. I did not know of your being here until she told me."

We soon grew friendly over our talk, and I asked her about her picture. Mr. Prosser answered proudly for her.

"It was sold directly for two hundred dollars," said he.

"I congratulate you," I said, turning to her. "That sum is not easily earned in these days."

"Janet often earns more than that," said Mr. Prosser.

"Oh, James, you shouldn't tell!" she expostulated.

"But I like to tell," said he, "and Mr. Bailey likes to hear."

"Indeed I do," I said.

"And what do you think she does with her money?" he continued.

"I cannot guess," was my reply.

"Spends it upon me!" said James.

"Oh, James!" she again expostulated.

I looked from one to the other. Was she heartless, and shallow, and vain? There was a glow upon her face and a light in her eyes that made her almost beautiful.

"But I haven't told you all yet," continued James. "When the rest of the world forsook and blamed me, Janet stood fast; when poverty and sickness came, Janet came too."

"But, James," she interrupted, "you seem to have sent for Mr. Bailey only to go into rhapsodies about me!" and as she glanced at him, I saw there were tell-tale tears in her eyes.

"Well, dear, it is Christmas Day," said he. "Mr. Bailey will forgive me for being happy over you."

"Forgive you, indeed!" said I. "There are not many men who have such cause for happiness. I could forgive a great deal to be convinced that there are true women still in the world; and I begin to see there are."

"We were once rich—I was going to say and happy," he continued, "but we are that still—eh, Janet? We stood the storm together, my little sister and I; and, in the face of the whole world of relations, she upheld me in what was right; and we gave up property that we legally might have kept, for the sake of being honest—eh, Janet?"

She sat stroking his hand in hers, while her eyes grew more and more misty.

"Pardon me for telling all this," said James. "It is Christmas, and I have need to tell some one of my good little sister, and what she has done for me."

"But don't say any more, James; for indeed I only did what pleased me," said Sunrise.

"Ay, that's where it is," said her brother; "everything good and kind is pleasant to her. All through my long illness, all through my depressed spirits, she has always been cheerful, always been the best of nurses."

"But now won't you let me give Mr. Bailey some tea?" she said; "and won't you let me tell him about the wonderful hamper? You forget I am a woman, and my tongue aches for want of use."

He smiled, and so did I. Then she busied herself with the tea things, and began to relate the whole history of the hamper, winding up with:

"Now who could have sent it?"

"Some kind relation, I should suggest," said I.

They both smiled.

"No," said they; "all our relations gave us up when we gave up our property."

"A friend," said I, "perhaps one of your brother's school friends."

"No, oh no," said she. "None of them knows our address."

"Then I must come to romance and suggest a fairy, a real old-fashioned Christmas fairy," I said. "What say you?"

"I could love that fairy very much," she said, laughing.

"No doubt the fairy would be delighted that you should," said I. "Love and fairies and Christmas all go together, you know."

"Ah, they did when I was a child," she answered with a sigh.

"And so they do now to those who look for and believe in them," I said.

"And do you?" she asked.

"I don't know about the fairies," I said; "but we all believe in the other two, don't we?"

"I hope so," she said, gravely, beginning to cut up the sponge cake.

It was years since I had been in company with so much genuine affection as that I saw between this brother and sister. I could not get over the strangeness of my being with them, and feeling as if I had known them for so long.

I watched one and the other, and listened to their playful talk till I almost began to think I should be lonely when I left them. Before I left I ventured a question.

"Why did you ask me in to-night?" I asked.

They looked at each other and smiled.

"Tell, Janet, tell," said James.

But she shook her pretty head and laughed.

"Well, then," he resumed, "Janet said that, being Christmas, we ought to make somebody happy, or try to do it, and we thought you must feel lonely by yourself, so she wrote the note to you."

"And I have been very happy," I said; "I thank you both for my pleasant evening, and for more than that."

"What more?" she asked.

"All you have taught me," I replied.

"I taught you!" she said.

She had followed me to the front door as I spoke, and as she opened it for me I replied:

"You have taught me to believe we have real women among us still."

Then I went home, and I know she returned to her brother with a happy face at my speech, for she would not have been a true woman unless she had been made happy by well-merited praise. I went home, as I said, and all night long I dreamed of Janet Prosser and her womanliness.

Every day after this, I went to see my neighbors, and every day they were glad to see me. But my week came near its end; there were ledgers and business waiting for me in the city; I must go back to the routine of life, and wait a whole year for another Christmas.

And should I wait a whole year before I made any one happy again? Would Janet wait a whole year before she made any one happy?

No, for she was always pleasing others. Then I wished I had her somewhere near me, that she might show me how to do this godlike work. I had found out she was neither vain, nor shallow, nor heartless; and with this knowledge came a desire to see her often and be with her.

"Well," I said to her at last, "this has been my pleasantest Christmas for a long while."

"Have we made it so?" she asked. "You have given us much pleasure."

"I am wondering what I shall do when I get back to the city," I said. "You will not be there."

"But in the city there are so many people, surely you won't miss us!" she said, laughingly.

"I shall miss your teaching," I replied.

"Am I such a pedagogue?" she asked.

"Such a woman rather," said I.

"You will make me as vain as a peacock," she said. "It is very well for me you are going away."

"And that is all you have to say to me?" he said.

"What more would you have?" she asked.

"Are you not sorry?" I said; "not a little bit sorry?"

She waited a moment, and then lifted her eyes to mine.

"Yes, I am sorry," she replied; "and I hope you will come again."

"Christmas ought to be a happy time to every one," I said. "Will you make it so to me?"

"I thought I had," she replied, in some surprise.

"But make it so happy," said I, "that its joy shall spread all through the year, and gather strength with each succeeding Christmas till the end of our lives."

She did not speak, but her lips quivered.

"Can you do this for me?" I asked.

Then she spoke in a scarcely audible whisper:

"I can try, if James likes."

And James did like. I went then and there to ask him, while Janet stood blushing by.

"Only," she said, kneeling beside him, and putting her head on his shoulder, "I can't leave you."

"No, no; James must come, too," I said.

I question if any people were so happy as we three at this termination of our Christmas.

* * * * * *

Several Christmases have come and gone since then; but there are two people who look back upon that time as the beginning of their best happiness—a happiness not without anxiety, care, and trouble at times, but still true happiness, because founded upon the holy teaching which Christmas brings.

As Janet says, "If everybody made somebody happy at Christmas, what a pleasant day it would be! You tried to make me happy, and I tried to make you happy; and both together we made James happy by our happiness."

To which womanly speech I find myself incompetent to add a single word except "Amen" and a Christmas greeting to all the world from James and Janet and me.

The Judge's Bride.

BY L. S. F.

"MAUD MULLER on a summer's day,
Raked the meadow sweet with hay,'
and I declare! Margery, here comes the Judge,' only this time it's only that conceited city lawyer who boards at Towsbury's."

Margery glanced up quickly, following the direction of her brother's glance, and saw, coming across the field toward them, a young man whom she did not fail to recognize as the "conceited lawyer."

Now this was not Margery's first meeting with him by any means.

"Oh Will! Please tell me how I look."

"Look!" exclaimed her brother, surveying her critically, "You look a fright."

This certainly was not reassuring; Margery dropped her eyes and began to rake as though the whole hay crop depended on her individual efforts.

"Good morning, Miss St. Clair."

It might have been the exertion of raking that made her cheeks so red as she turned to greet the speaker and introduce her brother.

"I came to say good-bye, Miss St. Clair," he said, turning back to her after a few commonplace remarks with Will.

"Good-bye!" she echoed in surprise.

"Yes. I am suddenly summoned back to the city."

Margery stood, somewhat embarrassed and thought:

"Why should this elegant stranger whom she had met only a few times, come to bid her good-bye?"

Her brother saw her perplexity and came to her relief.

"When do you go, Mr. Montrose?" he asked.

"By the four o'clock train, so you see I have no time to lose," and he held out his hand to Will.

"Good-bye, Miss St. Clair."

Margery had by this time recovered sufficiently to raise her eyes and bid him a timid "Good-bye, Mr. Montrose."

Then he was gone.

He was scarcely out of hearing before Will exploded:

"Ah, Margery! not so much like Maud Muller after all."

"Hush Will," and a soft little hand was laid on his lips, "he might hear."

He had heard and he smiled as he murmured:

"'Beneath her torn hat glowed the wealth,
Of simple beauty and rustic health.'"

"It is more like Maud Muller than you think it, Will," he thought, and sighed as he quoted:

"But he thought of his sisters, proud and cold,
And his mother, vain of her rank and gold."

And even as the judge in the poem closed his heart and rode back to town, so did Herbert Montrose try, in the rush of city life, to lose the memory of a pair of sweet hazel eyes that haunted him most persistently.

* * * * * *

"Oh! mother, how can I give you up," moaned Margery, with her head bowed on her hands, "and father, how can you be so cruel?" she continued, as she reached for the letter which she had thrown on the table after one indignant glance at its contents.

We will look over her shoulder while she reads with tear dimmed eyes:

"Daughter Margery: I have just received a letter from your aunt, informing me of your most ungrateful rejection of her extremely generous offer. You could not have considered it properly before answering her. She offers to make you sole heir of her fortune, and only on condition that you will take her name and be as a daughter to her. It would be folly to refuse such a grand opportunity. I command you to accept it."

A cold, curt letter for a father to write, yet John St. Clair did love his daughter, only his worldly ambition for her exceeded his fatherly love.

Three months ago had Margery entered her aunt's house as a visitor, and she had enjoyed her visit, for her aunt, although somewhat eccentric was kind, oppressively so at times; but to take her aunt as an adopted mother and live with her always, seeing her own mother but seldom, this was hard.

Only two days ago had she firmly refused to do so, and in answer to her aunt's threat of appealing to her father had said, a little defiantly:

"When father commands me to accept your offer I will do so."

Next morning at breakfast her aunt asked:

"You received a letter from home yesterday, did you not?"

"Yes, and I consent to your wish and my father's."

"I am so glad, dear, and now, Margery, henceforth you are Maud. From old and painful recollections I dislike the name 'Margery.'"

"As you please," murmured the latter.

"And now I must have your wardrobe replenished, as I desire you to enter society this winter."

So Margery, or under her new name, Maud, was soon in the giddy round of balls, parties, dinners, theatre going, and all that pertains to the social life of a fashionable young lady.

She was much admired, deferred to, and flattered, but hid her sadness midst it all, behind a mask of wit and vivacity.

No one saw the listless Margery who wearily laid off her finery and murmured with a bitter smile:

"Yes. They bow to and pay court to Maud Canham, where they would not be now a second glance on Margery St. Clair."

Nearly two years passed thus since we saw Margery in the meadow; she is in a crowded ball room now; she seems in unusually good spirits to-night, and her bright looks and witty speeches have drawn quite a knot of gentlemen around the sofa where she sits.

Presently the crowd scatters a little, and the hostess appears with a young man whom she introduces as Mr. Herbert Montrose.

They met as strangers. He did not recognize her.

"He has forgotten Margery, of course," she thought, as he sat down beside her.

After that night, she saw much of Mr. Montrose. He seemed to seize on every available opportunity to be with her.

One evening he said:

"Do you know Miss Canham, it is very singular, but ever since the night I met you, I have the impression that I had known you before, and yet I cannot remember ever having heard your name previous to our recent introduction."

"Perhaps you did know me ages ago," she said, half archly.

"Ages ago," he echoed.

"Do you remember, Mr Montrose, going to bid a country girl good-bye, and finding her in the meadow raking hay? Do you remember her torn straw hat and dark calico dress? Ah! that simple girl was far happier than I am, although we are the same person. Was it only two years ago or was it ages?"

"Yes, I remember," replied Hubert softly, "I was there last summer but could not find your whereabouts. The neighbors told me your parents had moved."

"Yes. They bought a large farm in a different part of the country, and Will went to college."

"I remember that Margery St. Clair could not imagine why I should come to bid her good-bye; I saw the wonder in her face. Is Maud Canham any wiser?"

For the second time Margery cast down her eyes before him, and knew not what to answer.

"And my little Maud Muller, your hazel eyes haunted me, until last summer I tried to find you. Maud,—Margery will you be the Judge's bride?"

"So Maud Muller will marry the 'Judge' after all," said Herbert a little later.

"Even if he is only a 'conceited lawyer,'" finished Margery audaciously.

LADIES AS DETECTIVES.

OF LATE a good deal has been said and written as to the adaptability of women to detective work. In fiction and the drama, the mysterious woman who arrives whence and departs whither no one knows, and who turns up with all the startling effect of Hawkshaw and charged with a like mission, is a not unfamiliar figure.

Generally, however, it is in diplomacy or political conspiracy that the feminine Fouche of fiction exercises her talent.

There exists some conflict of opinion as to whether lady detectives are employed [illegible] and we have accordingly made some inquiries on the subject.

As regard it may be stated broadly that the authorities rarely avail themselves of female assistance, and then only temporarily and for special and irresponsible work.

But while the field of official criminal investigation is practically closed to ladies, the private inquiry agencies offer her a new profession.

With a view to obtaining the most trustworthy information upon the subject of a subject with so peculiar a nature, we recently interviewed the courteous manager of a detective and inquiry association, and in result were astonished to find the strides which the lady detective has made.

The association in question, it appears, employs a large staff of female detectives of various ages, social position, and nationalities; and their talents are brought into play in a surprising variety of directions.

We were fully prepared to learn that females were engaged upon investigations in connection with divorces and judicial separations; also in cases of theft, fraud, etc.; and we were not surprised to learn that they sometimes enter households or establishments in the character of servants.

For example, the manager related an instance where a gentleman of high position consulted his firm with reference to a series of peculations which for some time had taken place in his household.

A lady detective was sent to fill the first vacancy in the staff of servants. It happened to be that of lady's maid, and the astonished master of the house in a very little time had conclusive evidence placed before him that the thief was none other than his own wife, who was partly threatened, partly cajoled into larceny by a scoundrel who had got her into his power, and who received the proceeds of her crime.

But we were not previously aware that ladies were used in connection with electioneering.

Women are, however, specially adapted apparently to the task of "sounding" a district as to the popularity of a member, the prospects of a candidate, the dissensions or unity of parties, etc.

Another field for the same enterprise is afforded by some matrimonial agencies. Should Corydon be doubtful as to the social status, antecedents, or prospects of Phyllis, one of the young ladies of the association is despatched on a mission to ascertain and report the necessary particulars.

Blackmailing cases also offer considerable scope for feminine ingenuity. In a recent case where a wealthy man was threatened with an action for breach of promise, a lady detective was despatched to Paris, put up at the hotel where the would be plaintiff was staying, cultivated her acquaintance, and returned to town with a chain of evidence, documentary and otherwise, which made it impossible for the plaintiff to come into court with hands sufficiently clean to establish her case.

Lady detectives are, too, employed in obtaining evidence as to the infringement of patents and trade secrets. The ramifications of this branch are too subtle and complicated to be dealt with here, but it is easy to understand the surprise of the sham inventor on finding that the man on whose brains he had been poaching knows, by some mysterious means, how, when, and where the trespass was committed.

Several medical societies also avail themselves of the services of female detectives in crusading against a certain class of quack doctors.

"Apparently your ladies are selected from various social grades?"

"Yes, and we have lady detectives for every class of case, and qualified to enter every circle of society. We maintain a carriage and pair with liveries, etc., for some of the ladies on our staff to use in the investigation of certain cases; and while we have agents in high life, we have others employed in less delicate work. The most irresponsible class are our 'watchers.' For instance, if a couple of men loaf about watching a house, they themselves become observed and probably wounded; but if they are seen walking or even talking in front of the same house with a couple of girls, suspicion is less likely to be aroused."

Steamship owners are in the habit of engaging lady detectives in cases where complaints have been made of articles strangely missing from the ladies' cabins. Cases of kleptomania are frequently brought to light in the "best houses" by the same means; and many an exchange of old sealskins for new has been revealed by the lady detective.

She is a curious personage. We may meet her in hotels, or boarding-houses, or ballrooms, and go away thinking what a graceful, intelligent girl she is, and never dream that she is "shadowing" the loud-talking, florid man on her left or the mysterious individual upon our right.

She sees a good deal of life in various phases, and doubtless finds that in mankind there is "a deal of human nature."

But if the lady detective has served no other purpose, she has justified her existence and refuted a calumny of doubtless masculine though immemorial origin by proving to the world that in some cases a woman can hold her tongue.

FREAKS OF ROYALTY.

England has had many monarchs of unruly ways, some of whom have indulged in freaks of a mad enough character, in all conscience, but, taking them in bulk, they have been a fairly staid and solid set of monarchs—as monarchs go.

The most "freaky" have been Charles II. and George IV., but as their ways were purely (or impurely) the ways of vicious pleasure, we need not trouble ourselves much about them.

Perhaps the most commendable freak that the "merry monarch" was ever betrayed into was that of setting up a laboratory at Whitehall, under the pretence of making experiments in chemistry.

Could anything be more absurd? Charles II. neglecting his Parliament and his pleasures for chemistry was indeed a freak of the first order.

France has been prolific of royal madcaps who have indulged in strange whims. Louis XI. was a queer compound of craft, cruelty, and folly.

To humble the pride of the Burgundian nobles who had accompanied him on his entry into Paris, he sent in amongst them a rude man-at-arms, horse and man covered with deer skins and armed with the antlers, who rode so fiercely through their ranks that no one could stand before the horse and rider.

Hidden behind some ladies, Louis enjoyed this lively incident from the windows of his hotel. At a later period of his life when confined by illness within his chateau at Tours, he used to get up mice hunts to remind him of his former pleasures of the chase.

Instruments of torture claimed much of the king's attention. A cage, made of iron, or of wood covered with iron plates, so small that a man could neither lie down straight nor stand upright in it, was the outcome of one of his freaks of revenge, and it gave him great delight to see his victims writhing within this extraordinary prison chamber.

One man was kept eleven years within one of these terrible cages. Another instrument of torture that he devised was a "pig organ," which was constructed for him under his own personal direction by the Abbe de Baigne, the Master of the Royal Music.

Pigs of different ages and sizes were procured, and placed in rows in a tent, being arranged in order according to the pitch and quality of their grunts and squeaks. In a line with them a rude cyboard was erected, and each key commanding a sharp-pointed instrument capable of extracting a sudden squeal of anguish out of the animal against which it was directed, and when the abbe began to play, the voices of the swine rose on the air in piercing squeals, but still with some approach to musical scale and effect.

Charles V. was a monarch of a very freakish nature, but his eccentricities generally took a melancholy turn.

At one time he employed himself in making watches, as at a later period Louis XVII. occupied his leisure in constructing locks.

But Charles began to mope and pine, and made himself so generally miserable that nothing would do but he must celebrate his own obsequies.

A tomb was accordingly erected in the monastery chapel, a coffin was made, and everything else was prepared in regular order.

At the time appointed, the monks and the imperial servants, carrying black tapers, fell in behind the coffin and the shroud enwrapped hero of the fantastic comedy, and, with solemn faces and measured tread, they marched to the chapel, where Charles, resigning his part of chief mourner, was laid in the coffin and listened with wrapt attention to his own requiem, and joined audibly in the prayers for the repose of his yet untranslated soul.

Then the coffin and its tenant were deposited in the tomb, and the attendants at this odd ceremony softly retired, carefully closing the chapel doors as they departed.

When Charles was tired of being buried alive, he arose and returned to his apartments, to be seized the next day with a fatal fever, which soon rendered a real funeral necessary.

A princess of the house of Stuart—the Princess of Buckingham, natural daughter of James II.—almost went as far as the unhappy Charles V. in the carrying out a mock funeral. Walpole has recounted the circumstances.

"She has sent for Mr. Anstis," he writes to Sir Horace Mann, "and settled the ceremonial of her burial. On Sunday she was so ill that she feared dying before all the pomp was come home. She said, 'Why won't they send the canopy for me to see? Let them send it though the tassels are not finished.' But yesterday was the greatest stroke of all. She made her ladies vow to her that, if she should be senseless, they would not sit down in the room before she was dead. She not only regulated the ceremony of her own burial, and dressed up the waxen figure of herself for Westminster Abbey, but had shown the same insensible pride in the death of her only son, dressing his figure, and sending messages to her friends that if they had a mind to see him lie in state she would carry them in conveniently at a back door."

A little story of a "freak" indulged in by Henry IV. of France must conclude our string of instances for the present.

While residing at Fontainebleau, his Majesty was one day, in the ardor of the chase, left behind by his courtiers and attendants, and came upon a countryman sitting at the foot of a tree.

"Do you think, sir," said the peasant, "there is any chance of our good King Henry's passing this way?"

"Why, there is some chance," said the king; "but if you could go to Fontainebleau you would be certain of seeing him there."

"Ah!" said the man, "but I am so weary."

"Well, then," said Henry, "get on my horse, behind me, and I will take you towards it."

The countryman thereupon mounted, and, after riding some way, asked how he should know the king from his courtiers.

"Easily enough," replied his Majesty; "the king will wear his hat, while his courtiers will be bareheaded."

This satisfied the man, and soon after they met the attendants, who immediately took off their hats, and the king, jumping off his horse, turned to the astonished countryman. "By gracious, sir," said the fellow, "either you are the king or I am."

A THOUGHT FOR CHRISTMAS.—If you desire pleasure, marry; if you prize your health, marry. A good wife is Heaven's best gift to man—his angel of mercy—minister of graces innumerable—his gem of many virtues—his casket of jewels—her voice, his sweetest music—her smiles, his brightest day—her kiss, the guardian of innocence—her arms, the pale of his safety—and her prayers, the ablest advocates of Heaven's blessing on his head.

CHILDISH THOUGHTS.—What a pity that one forgets one's childish thoughts. Their originality would produce such an effect, properly managed. It is curious to observe that by far the most useful part of our knowledge is acquired unconsciously. We remember learning to read and write, but we do not remember how we learn to talk, to distinguish colors, &c. The first thought that a child wilfully conceals is an epoch—one of life's most important—and yet who can recall it.

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A widow, occupying a large house in a fashionable quarter in London, was pressed by her creditors, and to get out of her difficulties she fell on the following plan. She sent for a wealthy solicitor—a bachelor—to make her will, and by it she disposed of between fifty and sixty thousand (imaginary) pounds. The solicitor proposed soon afterwards, was accepted, and found himself the happy husband of a penniless adventuress.

An ingenious scheme of petty robbery has come to the notice of the Cincinnati police. The thief is a young woman. She lingers near the grocery and meat scope, and when a child appears with a basket she greets the little one with an engaging smile and words about like this: "Why, don't you know me? I am Bessie. Your mother sent me after you to tell you to come right home, and I will get the groceries (or meat) for you." In every instance reported the woman has succeeded in gaining possession of the basket and money and making her escape.

Parisians have lately been entertained by a remarkable artist, who displays wonderful skill in her peculiar form of painting. With plates of various colored sand before her, she takes the sand in her right hand and causes it to fall in beautiful designs upon a table. A bunch of grapes is pictured with violet sand, a leaf with green sand, the stalk with brown sand, and relief and shadows by other sands; when the work is brushed away a bouquet of roses and other objects are represented with the same dexterity and delicacy.

The electric light has now been long enough in use in our houses, theatres and public places to lose the right to claim any special privileges or immunities as a novelty or a plaything. Will some one kindly notice that there is nearly always too much of it? No sooner was gas laid on than people who had contentedly read their book by the light of a single flickering candle must have gas jets equal to 15 or 20 candles. Now if there is not a regular sunburst of 100 candle power they seem to people feel that they are in the dark. It is too, too much. At one or two of the theatres, for instance, you can't enjoy the comfort you would otherwise derive from the diminished heat and improved ventilation, because of the glaring auditorium that strike you blind.

It will surprise a great many persons to know that it does very little good to mark "confidential" or "personal" on a letter to a great man. The private secretary of a man of national importance in this city said yesterday that if a letter should come to his employer marked, "On no account to be opened by the private secretary," he would hesitate a moment, but after that he would open it. "I would do that," he said, "because it would occur to me that it was what I am paid for. Originally, before the pestering of public men by letter became such an art as it is, we opened all ordinary letters and gave the great men only those that were marked 'personal.' But these swelled in volume until if he opened them all there would be time for nothing else. As far as I know, all other private secretaries follow the same rule."

A lawsuit interesting to the members of the medical profession, as well as to apothecaries, is before the courts in Montreal. A French Canadian practitioner, wishing to prescribe quinine for a child, through absent-mindedness wrote upon his prescription blank plate of morphine, instead of bisulphate of quinine. The paper was taken to an apothecary, whose assistant perceiving an error at once, attempted a substitution, and made up the powders with sulphate of morphine. The result was fatal. And now a curiously complicated question has to be settled by the judges. The father of the child has sued the doctor because it was through the latter's absent-mindedness that the child lost its life. The doctor has sued the apothecary for all the damages to which the father's suit may put him. He pleads that he ordered bisulphate of morphine, and that if such a substance existed and if the apothecary had sent it to the child he would be responsible, but he never ordered sulphate of morphine, and it was the sulphate of morphine that killed the child.

A German medical journal relates a remarkable instance of the effect of nervous excitement. "A locomotive engineer on a passenger train, on rounding a curve suddenly saw a train about 60 yards ahead, and stationary. With great presence of mind he reversed his engine, signalled for brakes to be applied, and, by very prompt action, prevented a disastrous collision. The excitement of the moment was tremendous, but only a violent trembling of the legs remained, and he continued at his post. But great mischief had been done. After five days he had to retire from his duties, and he gradually became unfit for all work. One a robust, stalwart man, he has become very thin, his gait is slouching and tottering, and his speech slow and stammering. He is suffering from what is known as 'railway spine,' a most distressing disease. His digestion, memory and ability to sleep are impaired, and a singular diminution of nervous sensibility has taken place over his whole body, so that he scarcely feels the prick of a needle sufficiently deep to bring blood. His legs are also benumbed up to the knees, and, altogether, the man is a wreck."

Our Young Folks.

MASTER BERTIE'S PARTY.

BY A. L. F.

ALTHOUGH it was near the Christmas holidays, when children may be expected to be like themselves, only more so, he had not the least idea of any mischief—not the least. But he did so wish to know the De Tomkyn boys. They were very grand—that De Tomkyn family over the way; and Cicely wanted to know them too, because the boys went out in top-hats on Sundays, and the girls had always new dresses and never wore pinafores.

When their father and mother were away, Bertie and Cicely made the acquaintance of their opposite neighbors. A letter had been left by mistake with "T-o-m-k-y-n" on it, and that day, in the garden of the square, Cicely said, "What a queer name they have! Why don't they spell it with an i, like our cook?"

And Bertie answered. "Oh, I know! The Tomkins with a y are much grander. They have *De* before their name, like all the knights that went to the Crusades."

Now the De Tomkyn family overheard Bertie, and made friends with him on the spot; and they all had a chat in the sooty kitchen.

The boys were Julius, Montague, and Claud; and the girls—who wore sashes and held their chins in the air—were Constantia and Clementina. Cicely, who was a very small girl, made the great mistake of mixing up these fine names, and calling them both "Concertina."

"You seem to be very musical," said Miss Clementina.

"Our father is," said Bertie seriously. "We have got two pianos at home—a little one against the wall, and a long one with a tail, you know."

"Oh, we have got two pianos too," said Miss Clementina; "and besides, they have both got tails."

"Both grands, you ought to say," said Miss Constantia. "We wouldn't have anything unless it was grand."

"I have a violin of my own," said the eldest boy.

Bertie and Cicely began to feel rather crushed by the grandeur of their new friends. Bertie was determined not to be outdone.

"My father has three fiddles," he said—"three! There are two little ones in cases, and a great big one that stands up on the floor like a man."

"Is your father at home now?" asked Julius.

"No," said the little pair; "mother and he went away last Saturday on a visit to some friends. We only have our old nurse, Mrs. Bobbins. It's awfully lonely!"

There was a pause, and the boys looked at each other.

"Are the three fiddles at home?" asked Montague.

Bertie and Cicely said "Yes."

After another pause and another exchange of looks, the little boy, Claud, said—

"Does anyone ever play the fiddles all together?"

"No—you goose!" said his amiable sister; "how could one person play three violins at one time?"

Miss Clementina would not have said "fiddles" for all the world.

"No, not the same person," said little Claud crossly. "I went to know—do they ever play them all at once?"

"Wouldn't it be a jolly row!" said Master Montague de Tomkyn. "I say, little girl, won't you ask us to tea?"

They all laughed at this straight suggestion.

"No, I won't," said Cicely bluntly. "We wouldn't have anything but bread-and-honey. Mother's away, you know, and there's only Mrs. Bobbins."

"Oh!" said all the De Tomkyn family. "If you have got honey, do ask us to tea with you. We don't want cake; we have cake every day at home."

The two children looked at them in awe and wonder.

"All right," said Bertie to his sister. "Let's have them. Will you all come to see us some day? And what day will you come?"

"To-day!" said Julius.

"This minute!" said Montague.

"Come along, quick!" said Claud.

"You all ought to have said 'If you please,'" said Miss Clementina, in a tone of rebuke; but she was the very first in the run with the rest.

"And 'Thank you,'" said Miss Constantia stuffy.

"Well we can all say 'Thank you' now," said little Claud; and he screamed out as he ran along—"If you please, we are going to tea—thank you!"

They all reached the door together, and Bertie stood on his toes and gave a trembling knock. He had no idea they would have come at once like that.

And Cicely whispered under the white sunbonnet—

"Oh, Bertie! what will Mrs. Bobbins say to us?"

When they all got in old Nurse Bobbins did not say much, but she got into a flutter and nearly went out of her wits—poor thing!—when five young strangers arrived to tea without a moment's notice. The five young strangers made themselves quite at home, too. The girls had their hats off in a minute, and each of them asked for six lumps of sugar in her tea; and the boys ate bread-and-honey until they were sticky all over. Good Mrs. Bobbins had a pain in her arm from cutting bread: and she said, for a hint, that no doubt they were sensible young ladies and gentlemen, and would want to go home early. "'Early to bed and early to rise'—you know the rest of it, sir," she said to the eldest of the boys.

"Oh! I know," said Julius. "Early to bed and early to rise gives you a headache and sleepy eyes."

"We don't go to bed early," Master Montague said; "and it is all right to-night, because they are sure to think we have gone to spend the evening with our cousins."

"We never go to bed till we can't keep our eyes open any more," said little Claud.

Cicely listened, and felt sad and cross. "We have to go to bed at half-past eight," she said; and for the first time she began to be discontented.

The children from over the way seemed to live upon plum cake, and stayed up every night as long as they could keep their eyes open. Poor little Cicely had no idea that the children from over the way were so badly brought up that no one could be happy with them for long.

Soon the three boys asked to see the fiddles. This, of course, was when Mrs. Bobbins went down stairs, feeling worried out of her life.

Clementina said they ought to have a concert, and Constantia said it would be fun, and the boys were eager for "a jolly row."

They went to the room where the violins were kept. Montague seized upon the violoncello, and would not give it up to anybody. He said he wanted the one that "stood up on the floor like a man."

Julius struggled for it, until Bertie said it would be broken, and Cicely began to cry. Then Julius took a violin, and said he would make it squeak louder than the big one.

Clementina had another violin, and Constantia and little Claud both sat to the piano. Bertie and Cicely wished they had been left something to play; so Bertie, in despair, took his toy drum, and Clementina told the little girl that if there was such a thing as a bell in the house she could make a nice noise by ringing it all the time. Cicely found a big bell, and sat down on the floor, and they all struck up together.

The banging, and ringing, and scraping, and groaning, and squeaking made the most frightful noise ever heard. Mrs. Bobbins could not persuade them to stop, and she got so excited that, as she afterwards declared, she did not know whether she was on her head or her heels; and, as she afterwards said, too, she thought the walls were tumbling down every minute.

The good lady tried to give a signal to the house across the way, waving her hand from the window to call assistance, and have the five intruders sent home; but so distracted by the noise was poor Mrs. Bobbins that she flung up the first window she came to and signalled wildly.

It happened to be not at the front, but at the back; and to her frightened imagination the children seemed all to have changed into wild little savages, and even the rooks wheeling outside startled her as if they were birds of prey.

When she could think clearly enough to see that she was at a back window, the terrible noise suddenly ceased, and, looking out on the stairs, she was greatly comforted by seeing Master Montague de Tomkyn rolling all the way down.

In the midst of the concert the owner of the three fiddles had arrived home in a cab unheard, and let himself in with a latch-key, and stood among the concert-givers. The father and mother of the two children were suddenly there in the midst of the circle.

The three violins fell with a crash, and Montague fled from the room in such a hurry that he arrived at the foot of the stairs head first, and all in a heap.

"What is this?" the musician exclaimed. "Who gave you leave to touch my instruments? So you have quite a party in my absence, Bertie?"

"Oh no," said Clementina, "please don't think they gave a party. We were only just having a quiet evening."

"Quiet!"

He could not help laughing.

"I should like to hear you having a noisy evening if this is a quiet one."

The De Tomkyn family did not stay long after that. Bertie and Cicely were getting alternately kisses and blame—the kisses because their parents had just come back, and the blame because their concert had not improved the violins.

"I think the strings were rotten, sir," said Julius, looking at the number of broken ones hanging loose.

And little Claud said:

"No, not rotten, Julius, but you know they are only made of catskins, and you played too loud."

"Violin strings are not made of catskins, but of catgut—quite a different substance. Good night, young people: it is time for my children to go to bed, and for me to mend my instruments."

* * * * * *

Bertie did not enjoy the company of the grand De Tomkyn family at his birthday party on the next Monday. He was told that he was a naughty boy, and that he had had his party already.

But when he and Cicely began to mingle their tears with their bread-and-butter over this disappointment they were consoled by hearing that their friends the Supers and Harveys and McNulty's were coming for "a quiet evening with just as much noise as last time, only of a different sort."

"But, mother," said little Cicely, "won't you let Concertina be asked?"

"Who is Concertina, dear, and why do you want her?"

"She is both the De Tomkyns," said the little child in pink cotton. "I don't know which of them, but they are ever so nice."

"Why so nice, Cicely?"

"I don't know, mother. But they never wear pinafores—they have lovely things. And they eat cake every day, and tell you so. And they stay up ever so late, and they say, 'Early to bed and early to rise gives you a headache and sleepy eyes.' So they don't go to bed early like us, and they just have everything they wish."

But it seemed that Cicely's mother did not approve of "Concertina," for the young ladies with their chins in the air were never asked to the house any more.

DOWN IN THE DEPTHS.—Mr. Prentice, son of the well known poet, fell in the bitter war between the Northern and Southern States of the American Union, which, as most of you are aware, raged between twenty and thirty years ago.

But some time before he met his patriotic death he had proved his courage in one of most perilous adventures ever recorded.

The Mammoth Cave in Kentucky is the largest cavern in the world. It contains an awful pit, the bottom of which had never been reached before Prentice's deed of daring, and, it is believed, has not been reached since.

He went down into the depths not from any foolhardiness, but for the purpose of exploring it in the interest of science. A long rope of great strength with a heavy stone fastened to it having been wound securely round his body, and a number of hats having been tied on his head to protect him from falling lumps of rock, Prentice, with a light in one hand, was lowered by six men into the black abyss.

At a depth of one hundred feet the spray from a waterfall nearly put out the light; and after he had accomplished a descent of one hundred and ninety feet he stood at the bottom of the pit! Stones and masses of earth had shot past him during the journey, but, fortunately, none of them hit him. In spite of the dangers he had gone through, he was cool enough to carve his name on the rocky walls of his resting-place.

But if the descent had been hard, the ascent was much more severe, for it is always easier to let down than to pull up. By this time, too, the tightly-drawn rope around his body was giving him keen pain. Even this, however, was nothing compared with the horrible and totally unexpected peril that presented itself ninety feet below the jaws of the pit.

By the friction of the rope over the roller, the wood had caught fire, and in a moment the rope itself was burning. So much Prentice could learn from the excited shouts of the alarmed folk above. What his feelings were can be better imagined than described.

By great good fortune the jar of water which the explorers had with them had not yet been required. It was at once opened and the liquid flung upon the burning rope and timber.

Then the men at the rope redoubled their exertions, and succeeded in raising young Prentice to the top without further risk.

Here he was the calmest of the party. His friends who had done the hauling up were quite exhausted by their labors. One—a Professor—fainted right away.

The hero of the adventure alone kept his presence of mind above ground—where, by-the-bye, he was now perfectly safe and sound—as he had kept it when far down in the depths of the dreadful pit.

S. U. W.

CHRISTMAS CARDS.—Even if we had the will to do it, magistrates and the police would not allow us to keep Christmas after the manner of the olden time. A German writer of the sixteenth century describes the English-speaking people "as vastly fond of great noises that fill the ear, such as the firing of cannon, beating of drums, and ringing of bells; so that it is common for a number of them that have got a glass in their heads to get up into some belfry and ring the bells for hours together for the sake of exercise."

That favorite Christmas amusement of the past would if practised in these degenerate days make the merry campanologists acquainted with the inside of a house of correction, or, at the least, cost them a fine.

The Feast of the Lord of Misrule would not be tolerated in the nineteenth century; while, as for the Festival of Fools, the bishops and the rest of the clergy would speedily drive out the mock pontiffs and impious mummers with contumely.

We have outlived those remnants of the pagan Saturnalia with which our forefathers celebrated the season of "peace on earth and goodwill towards men," and are content to make a holiday with decorum.

In place of the mockery of religious rites and all kinds of rough and foolish horseplay, we exchange bits of colored pasteboard more or less sentimental and apposite. These Christmas Cards become every year more numerous, more beautiful, and cheaper.

And in addition to the service rendered to family affection and social good feeling, this graceful custom educates the public taste for beautiful forms, and is of advantage in many ways, not only in encouraging an elegant and profitable industry, but in cultivating a generous and appreciative spirit, thoroughly in keeping with the best traditions of the most genial festival of the national faith.

LONG MOURNING.—A Scotch paper tells of how a man who spent the greater portion of the last ten years of his life by his wife's grave. "He went to the cemetery early in the morning, and after removing any microscopic weed that might have showed itself since the previous evening, would light his pipe and solemnly contemplate the stones in his vicinity. He went away regularly to his meals, and as regularly took his afternoon nap on the grass by the graveside. Shortly before his last visit to the cherished spot he requested me to decipher for him the dates upon several of the gravestones; and we conversed about many whom he had known in life, and who had passed away. I remarked that the churchyard was a very pretty place, and his face lighted up as he rejoined: 'Ah, master, I've always thought I should like to be buried here, for,' looking around, 'you see, there's such a splendid view from here.' This was uttered in good faith, and the old man seemed convinced that neither coffin lid nor churchyard clods would obstruct his view. Perhaps they didn't! In a few brief weeks he came to his favorite haunt to stay. 'Poor old William,' the flowers upon your grave have run wild long ago, and no one seems to remember you as they pass by."

THEY HAVE an effective way of dealing with habitual drunkards in Norway and Sweden. They put them in jail, and, it is said, feed them entirely on bread and wine. The bread is steeped in wine for an hour before it is served.

"The first day a man will gladly take it, but before many days pass he hates the sight of it. It is told that after an incarceration of this sort many men become total abstainers."

SOME people only understand enough of truth to respect it.

THE HEARTHSTONE.

BY C. D.

A holy place is the hearthstone,
Where loved ones are gathered 'round,
Where mothers, sires, and sisters dear,
And brothers and friends are found.

A holy place is the hearthstone—
Home's innermost shrine is there—
Laden with blessed benison,
And hallowed by loving prayer.

A holy place is the hearthstone,
Where the youth have wooed and won,
And wed, and gone to the battle
Of life, with full armor on.

A holy place is the hearthstone,
Where manhood has settled down
With blessings blossoming round him,
And love for a priceless crown.

A holy place is the hearthstone,
Whence the old and young have gone
To rest from their weary labor,
When the battle of life was done.

And, oh, from the holy hearthstone,
When parted from those we love,
May we go to meet by the hearthstone,
Of "Our Father's" house above.

ABOUT THE TREES.

There 's nothing in the whole world of Nature around which have not grown superstitions more or less whimsical and absurd. Trees have been, and still are, worshipped and venerated, and trees are also avoided as uncanny things, the very name of which must only be spoken in an awe-stricken whisper.

Some are famous only for their peculiarities, and are neither feared nor liked. A list, numbering less than fifty such trees, now lies before us, the first of which is the apple-tree.

Apart from the veneration that has been associated with this, as a mistletoe bearing tree, it has been, in times past, customary on the part of farmers and others to toast, and, in a sense, offer up sacrifices, to this common fruit-tree.

The ash has always been associated with superstition, more of a divinatory character than anything else. It is an article of Icelandish belief that the wood of the mountain ash should never be used for fuel, because all who sit round a fire composed of it would of a certainty become enemies.

The even leaved ash played a very important part in ancient love charms, as by it lovelorn damsels were enabled to discover their future husbands. It was also good for bringing luck.

Amongst the ancients it was generally believed that lightning would not touch the bay-tree, and, in consequence, its leaves were used as a charm against the lightning's flash.

An old poem informs us that "Thunder nor fierce lightning harms the bay." The withering of the bay-tree was considered an omen of the most dangerous character, and a sure presage of death.

It is also regarded as an emblem of the resurrection, and Sir Thomas Browne tells us that when apparently dead it will often revive, and its dry leaves expand with their former freshness.

The bay-tree was known, prior to the Christian era, as the tree of Apollo, the legend stating that Daphne was transformed by Jupiter into a bay-tree, in order to save her from the pursuit of Apollo. Through this, its leaves were chosen to form the wreath with which poets and successful competitors in games were crowned. The Pythian priestesses used to chew the leaves because, after a season of abstinence, they produced some degree of excitement which went by the names of prophecy and inspiration.

Like the ash, it possesses divinatory powers, and formerly, at Christmas time, it was customary to crush the leaves in the hollow of the hand. If they gave off a crackling sound the lover was true; if not, he was false.

The bay was used at Christmas time for decorative purposes, as the holly and mistletoe are now.

There is evidence that some virtue or significance was once associated with the box-tree. What that virtue was cannot now be ascertained; but in all probability it had some connection with the words of Isaiah, that "the box-tree shall flourish in the land of Israel, when the waste places shall resume their ancient fruitfulness, and become the garden of the Lord."

There is one tree in Asia, the only tree of the kind known to exist, which bears the name of Buddha's hair tree. The story runs, that the hair of Teong Kaba, the founder of Buddhism, was cut off when he was three years of age.

It was thrown outside his parent's tent, and from it grew a remarkable tree, every leaf of which bears on its surface a character in the sacred language of Thibet. The Abbe Huc, the famous traveler, declared that the tree was quite free from even the suspicion of a fraud. He also states that, though many attempts had been made to propagate the tree by seeds and cuttings, all had failed. The Lamasery connected with the tree is a great place of resort for pilgrims.

Next in alphabetical order comes the cypress tree, which by us is usually associated with mourning and death, owing probably to its dark and sombre hue. From very remote times, in the East, however, it has been associated with births, and marriages, and rejoicings generally.

When amongst the inhabitants of the Greek Archipelago, a daughter was born, a grove of cypress trees was planted by her father as her future portion, her dowry increasing as her years multiplied. By this means we are enabled to trace the origin of the name by which these groves were designated, "daughters' dowers."

The oldest tree in Europe is a cypress, at Somma, in Lombard, Italy. It is believed to be nineteen hundred and twenty nine years of age, is one hundred and six feet high, and twenty feet in circumference one foot from the ground.

Napoleon, when laying down his plan for the great road over the Simplon, diverged from a straight line in order to avoid injuring this tree. Strabo mentions a cypress in Persia two thousand five hundred years old; and De Candolle relates that he saw one in Mexico which measured one hundred and twenty feet round at its base.

This he considered to be older than the baobab tree of Africa, which, it is estimated, has existed five thousand seven hundred years.

About the elder tree there has grown up quite a luxury of superstitions, principally owing to the tradition that it was on an elder-tree that Judas went out and hanged himself. The twigs of this tree were formerly believed to be a specific against epilepsy.

"Boys," says an old writer, "must not be beaten with an elder stick; it hinders their growth."

Grains of Gold.

Few are innocently idle.

Vindicate not thy errors.

Vice leads to wretchedness.

Frugality is a good revenue.

Fulfil thy just engagements.

A vain mind is dangerously ill.

He who doth his best, doth well.

Wishing is not a sign of wisdom.

Forbearance is attended with profit.

In a calm sea, every man is a pilot.

To a rotten ship every wind is contrary.

Humility is sometimes mistaken for servility.

Asseveration does not always remove doubt.

He runs well who outstrips his own errors.

If we subdue not our passions they will subdue us.

Perfection is the point at which all should aim.

If every man would mend one all would be amended.

Whoever is angry at another, may be sure he is wrong himself.

A discontented man is like a snake who would swallow an elephant.

It requires something more than natural courage to renounce false pleasures.

It is said of bees, that in foul weather they are the most busy in their hives.

If men will have no care for the future they will soon have sorrow for the past.

If thou wouldst exercise authority without giving offence, control thy passions.

If travellers toward heaven miss their way, the fault will be altogether their own.

Virtue is not so versatile in its nature, as to be impracticable in any possible condition of human life.

Femininities.

Proud looks lose hearts, but courteous words win them.

Poverty wants some, luxury many, and avarice all things.

An exchange says it makes a woman sick to keep a secret.

Look not to a woman's head for her brains, but to her heart.

Falsehood could do little mischief if it did not gain the credit of truth.

When a girl ceases to blush she has lost the most powerful charm of beauty.

Women, it is said, live longer than men This may be true, but of course they never get so old.

Fleecy lined silk mittens are being worn outside of the kid gloves on cold nights coming home from the play.

A soft brush, and a small piece of sponge wetted with pure naphtha, will clean volcanite jewelry, chains, brooches, etc.

Women must have some doubts about their power over men, and are therefore constantly experimenting to see whether it will work.

A wag says that it is proposed to alter the formula of the marriage service to, "Who will dare to take this woman for his wedded wife?"

When a woman gets angry you can generally depend on her saying frankly what she thinks—or, at least, what she thinks she thinks just then.

"Clara, that horrid Mr Slick has just left. I do think he has a lying tongue." "I shouldn't be surprised, Alice; I know he has false teeth."

The calumniator is like the dragon which pursued a woman, but not being able to overtake her, opened his mouth and threw a flood after her to drown her.

In a tete a tete a woman speaks in a loud tone to the man she is indifferent to, in a low tone to the one she begins to love, and keeps silent with the one she loves.

She: "And do you really think that you would be happy with me as your wife?" He: "Oh, I am sure. I have always been a lucky fellow in games of chance."

Lady visitor, to little boy, whose mother has been ill: "Georgie, is your mother any better?" Georgie: "Yes, ma'am; but she can't walk around above a whisper."

Perhaps the advice of a certain dear old lady applies to etiquette as well as to other affairs of life. "Speak the truth always," she was wont to say, "but speak it gently."

Leap year is a sort of wild delusion any way. The pretty girl has never any use for it, and the homely one is afraid to take advantage of its privileges for fear she will be rejected.

How many souls hunger till they are past their appetite; go on—down through the years—needy and waiting, and never find or grasp that which a sure instinct tells them they were made for.

Perdita: "What a cheerful way you must have of refusing a man. You seem to send them away supremely happy." Beatrice: "I tell them that the report that I am a great heiress is a mistake."

Lady, leaving store: "You bet I am up to the tricks of these merchants. I made him come down $1 on the price." Merchant, to himself: "I am up to the tricks of these lady customers. I put the price up $1."

Physicians are disputing whether it is possible for a man to commit suicide by holding his breath. There are some who think perhaps a man could do it, but they are all unanimously agreed that a woman couldn't.

Queen Victoria, it is said, has a number of unpublished manuscripts in her possession which may see print after her death. Their nature is not known, but it is understood that poems and short stories form the bulk of the collection.

A Reading girl postponed her wedding because she was unable to secure the white horses owned by a certain liveryman for the date she had fixed. The animals are in great demand for weddings, and are said to bring luck to the bride.

The Empress Dowager of China has been shorn of her prestige by the rebellious independence of the young Emperor. He refused to see the bride which she forced upon him, and has been issuing vigorous decrees on his own account.

Lecturer: "All statistics prove that the blonde women are more difficult to get along with than the brunettes." Astonished man in the audience, starting up: "Are you certain of that?" Professor: "It is a fact." Astonished man: "Then I believe my wife's black hair is dyed."

The smaller and bluer a skye terrier the more he costs; and one of these pets on getting his first bath at the hands of a lady to whom he had been given by a bachelor, who in turn had bought him dirt cheap off a street peddler, astounded his fair mistress by turning the water a heavenly blue and coming out a subdued mouse-tint.

In instructing her how to handle the weekly wash, a Germantown lady told her servant to take the horse to the kitchen and hang the clothes on it to dry. The following morning the household were aroused by a great noise, and investigation showed that Sarah had backed the family horse from the stable into the kitchen and had tried to cover it with wet clothes, and the animal objected to the treatment.

"Well, Annie, do you like going to school?" asked a visitor of an amiable girl who had never been famous for her devotion to her books. "Ye-es," said Annie, hesitatingly, after some consideration; "I really think I like it very well." "That's good. And why do you like it?" "Well, there are so many pleasant things about it," said Annie, with a smile over remembered joys. "Walking to the school-house in the morning, you know, and talking with the girls at recess, and coming home at noon and night. Oh, yes, I really think I like to go to school."

Masculinities.

Out West they call whisky "coffin varnish."

Never speculate under any circumstances.

He who knows nothing is confident in everything.

Pleasure and satiety live next door to one another.

Grace sometimes finds its way into the least promising heart.

In the race of life it isn't the fast men who come out ahead.

Money makes the man, but the man has to make the money first.

In some Detroit clothing stores a turkey goes with every overcoat.

The more a man becomes wrapped up in himself the chillier he gets.

The man is not worth a fig who cannot stand abuse philosophically.

Those who give ear to slanderers are worse than slanderers themselves.

Did any man ever feel that he secured the sympathy he deserved when sick?

He that gives liberally to a grateful man invests his money at compound interest.

Men's heads are sometimes like omnibuses—the empty ones make the most noise.

He that makes an exhibition of his passion shows his enemy his vulnerable points.

A philosopher is a man who bears with resignation the toothache from which his neighbor is suffering.

Tell your wife she looks well in her new hat, and rest assured that your dinner will be well served.

A dentist may pull teeth for children, but we have found that his patients are nearly all grown people.

Three racing skiffs all in a bunch, with oarsmen pulling for dear life, make a neat silver bronze paper-weight.

Envious young man, speaking of favored rival: "Yes, George is clever and handsome, but he is so abominably conceited."

At the club. Brown: "Does your wife keep her temper very well?" Jones: "Um—um—er—some; but I get the most of it."

From a pretty woman's album: "A stupid fellow compliments a woman on her beautiful teeth, but a clever one makes her laugh."

"What an easy time you men have," she said. "I only wish I had been born a man." "I wish you had," replied her husband."

When you have a cold you do not know how to cure it. All your friends know how, and they tell you, but that does not affect the cold.

Duty is a power which rises with us in the morning, and goes to rest with us at night. It is coextensive with the action of our intelligence.

Digging post holes, repairs and hauling gravel should be done before the ground freezes. It entails twice the labor to defer such work until later.

The Weather Bureau has invented a new storm signal. It is of a yellow color and denotes that the weather man feels in his bones that something or other is going to happen soon.

A 12 year old tramp has turned up in Concord, N. H. According to his story he belongs in New Albany, Ind., and has been wandering over the country for two years. Both his father and mother, he says, are dead.

The negroes of Texas own 1 000 000 acres of land, pay taxes on $20,000,000 worth of property, have 2,000 churches, 2,000 benevolent associations, 2,500 common schools, 15 newspapers, and 125,000 children being educated.

"Mamma," said Bessie, as she watched her baby brother squirming in the bath-tub, "Willie is like a piece of flannel." "What makes you think so?" asked her mother. "Oh, because he shrinks when he's washed."

Unwonted circumstances may make us all rather unlike ourselves; there are conditions under which the most majestic person is obliged to sneeze, and our emotions are liable to be acted on in the same incongruous manner.

"Is there anything you wish for, dear?" said the young wife fondly to her husband at the breakfast-table on the morning after the wedding. "Yes, I wish somebody would give me $10 for that $5,000 check your father put among the wedding presents."

Mrs. Deering: "I was surprised at your condition when you came in last night. It's a long time since I saw you so before." Mr. Deering: "Now what's the matter? I'll swear I was sober last night." Mrs. D.: "I know you were, and that's what surprised me."

Unsuspecting mother: "I can't imagine where all the cake goes." Guilty Ethel, anxious to avert suspicion: "It must be the kid." Unsuspecting mother: "The kid! What kid?" Guilty Ethel: "I don't know, but I heard Uncle Harry say to papa, 'That kid takes the cake'."

An Ohio paper prints the following notice under the heading "Obituaries": "Mr. William Jones, of Malta township, aged 83, passed peacefully away on Tuesday last from single blessedness to matrimonial bliss, after a short but sudden attack by Alice Blossom, a blooming widow of 23."

A Nebraska editor's barn was burned the other day, and he crowded out the latest news from Stanley in order to insert a two-column account of "Lurid Work of the Fire Fiend!" as he expressed it. And he ended thus: "As the last dying flame flickered heavenward we realized that the loss was $65—no insurance. Thus to great and small alike come the deeper tragedies of life that furrow the cheek and sear the heart. We hope the coyotes who are in arrears will now have the decency to pay up. Verb sap."

Recent Book Issues.

"A Quiet Life," by Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett is published by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, this city. It is a tender, pathetic and entertaining love story, told with great power and skill. Price 25 cents.

FRESH PERIODICALS.

With the December number, which is bright and entertaining throughout, the *Magazine of American History* completes its twenty second volume. A fine portrait of Lord Brougham forms the frontispiece of this issue, a pleasing sketch of his early career is given. "A Tribute to Hooper C. Van Voorst" and "The Story of Margaret Schuyler," a poem, follow. Curiously interesting is the article of R. W. Shufeldt, "The Drawings of a Navajo Artist," illustrated with the Indian pencil; as is also the "Acrostic by John Quincy Adams," in fac simile, "The Scioto Purchase of 1787," and the "Private Contract Provision in Ordinance of 1787," are important contributions. "Joseph Hawley, the Northampton Statesman," is the theme of a scholarly paper; "Fort Percot, Wisconsin," "First Edition of the Bible printed in America," and "General Grant and the French," are likewise full of interest. Published at 743 Broadway, New York city.

The December issue of the *Eclectic* closes the fiftieth volume of the new series of this old and favorite periodical. Sir Samuel Baker opens the current number with a striking article on "African Development in the Soudan." Arminius Vambrey writes about "The Shah's Impression of Europe." Horace Victor is the author of a highly interesting paper on "Eastern Women." The picturesque features of early California life are treated by Horace Hutchinson. One of the most piquant papers in the number is "Roman Catholicism in America." Norman Lockyer, the distinguished astronomer and spectroscopist, is represented by "The History of a Star." Among lighter articles are "A Modern Correspondence," "The Bronze Axe," "A Court Day in Fiji," and "Indian Insects." Alfred J. H. Crespi, under the title of "Some Recent Scientific Advances," gives a very interesting account of recent progress in learned investigation. Mrs. Oliphant contributes the first part of a short novelette, entitled "Mademoiselle." A. C. Swinburne, Ronnell Rodd and others contribute brilliant verse. The shorter papers are bright and suggestive.

PERSISTENCE.—It is safe to say that there is no real greatness, no efficient power, no true genius without persistent and continuous effort.

The germs of power may exist, undeveloped faculties may be hidden, flashes that pass for sunlight, sparks that are mistaken for warmth, and random blows that pass for powerful action may dazzle or deceive for a time; but without persistence of character the germ dies, the faculty withers, the flash vanishes, the spark goes out, the blow descends only on the air. All truly eminent men, all those whose names live in the history of thought or of action, where characterised by this persistence.

By it alone could they withstand the temptations of self indulgence, the assaults of enemies, the flatteries of friends, the fear of consequences.

Whether it is a Washington in battle, a Newton in science, a Shakespeare in literature, or a Howard in philanthropy, the same tenacity of purpose and perseverance in action are manifest in all.

INDUSTRY.—Is there any education so essential as that which teaches the young to restrain their desires within the limits which their own honest industry can supply? Plato, in his laws, would not have any one allowed to draw water from his neighbor's well until he had proved by hard digging that there was no water on his own ground.

It might be well for all young persons to have a similar rule impressed upon them with regard to money. Even for a necessity as urgent as that of water, they should exhaust every effort to obtain it for themselves—by energy, industry, and frugality—before they apply to another even for temporary help.

But, if they are forced at length to do so, let the burden of the debt weigh heavily until it is discharged; let them feel that it is a sacrifice of personal independence, a giving up of freedom for a time, which they will hasten with all speed to regain.

A BLIND SCULPTOR, Vidal by name is among the wonders of France. He is guided altogether in his work by the sense of touch. A dog, horse, human face or anything alive or dead he models with as much ease as any of the dozens of Parisian sculptors who still retain the faculty of sight.

From 1855 to 1875 Vidal received, it is said, more medals than any other exhibitor of works in the Paris art exhibition. Many of his works, made in the solitude of his perpetual midnight, were at the Paris Exposition, where the blind wonder contended in friendly rivalry with his less unfortunate brother artists.

"Confound it!"

"What's the matter, Bromley?"

"Why, whenever I reach in my vest pocket for a match it happens to be a toothpick, and when I fumble for a toothpick it's a match."

ASTHMATIC TROUBLES and Soreness of the Lungs or Throat, are usually overcome by Dr. Jayne's Expectorant—a sure curative for all Coughs.

Bertha's Fairy.

BY T. F. SAFFORD

BERTHA'S father had been drowned in a storm quite three months, and the waters which had been so cruel to the fisherman and his family, must still be almost their sole dependence. Bertha's mother found the struggle with poverty a sharp one, and poor little Bertha—eleven years old—helped as well as she could, catching fish and either selling or making use of them at home. She had inherited her father's love of the sea and had learned to manage a skiff well and skilfully.

She made a pretty picture in her own little boat the "Fairy," flushed with exercise and health, her blonde hair floating out in the sunshine and her blue eyes darkening with pleasure.

Her father had taught her just where to "drop anchor" and where to throw her line, and she was generally successful.

One morning she left home very sad indeed; for all night her dear mother had been sick and she was compelled to leave her alone, while she caught her fish to send two miles to Freeport to market. For the kind-hearted neighbors would carry her basket with their own and bring back the money for its contents with many kindly words for her patient toil and trouble. She drew the "Fairy" up on a "drop" a little apart from the one she usually occupied and threw out her line with a heavy heart.

It seemed a long long time before she was rewarded, but like all good fishermen, she bided her time and soon had had some shining beauties about her.

She threw out one more bait, the most tempting which she had saved for the last and best. What luck would it bring her she wondered and waited patiently.

There! a hard pull that was and a fine one. She actually laughed as she landed him, struggling with all his might, in the boat.

She leaned over to watch his efforts, struggling hard to make his way back to the water and thought he was the finest she had ever hooked.

When suddenly! a soft musical voice called her, and looking up she saw the oddest little figure sitting in the bow of the boat.

Her heart almost stopped its beating for wonderment. Bertha could not answer, she only sat and looked.

"Bertha," again chimed the little creature, "would you break my heart? Give me back my Prince."

Bertha's amazement increased, and her blue eyes opened wider and wider, for she could not understand what the strange words meant. There she sat with her tiny jeweled fingers clasped tight together, and her little face turned pleadingly up to Bertha's. Her long hair, that shone like gold in the sun, and glistened like diamonds with the spray in it, hung way down over the green light robe she seemed to be wrapped in rather than wore.

"You have made him bleed with your cruel hook and now you will take him away from me for ever." She pointed her finger at the large fish lying at Bertha's feet panting and gasping.

"Put him back in the water," she continued, "he is my Prince who is being punished by a wicked water witch and tomorrow he will be restored to his own form again, if you will give me back his life."

"But he is the finest one I ever caught," Bertha said, recovering her voice and fixing a longing look on the fine fellow now fast losing strength.

"Oh! he will die—he is dying," moaned the little creature—"and you will not give him to me."

"He will sell for a good sum and I can get the wine for mother," was answered slowly and irresolutely.

"It will break my heart and I will die too," pleaded the little voice.

Bertha hesitated no longer. Lifting the fish from the sun-warmed boards she carefully raised and put him over the side of the boat into the water, holding him for a minute 'till he regained strength enough to swim gracefully away, which he did with a little flutter and farewell wave of his tail.

"You will be rewarded," Bertha heard the tiny voice cry out, and she slipped easily and noiselessly into the sparkling water.

She rubbed her eyes and looked, but not a vestige could she see of the little lady or the fish. She wondered if it could have been a dream. Her last bait was surely gone, and the tones of the small voice still rung gladly on the air.

"You will be rewarded."

Bertha looked at the fish still left her and wondered if she would get enough money for them to pay for the nourishment her mother must have.

Her heart was hardly less heavy than it was when she first started out, but she knew her mother would be needing her so making strong and steady strokes she soon reached home. There was someone stirring at the little cottage, she knew, when she reached the little gate, but thought it one of the good neighbors stopping in to see the sick mother. But no! it surely was a man's voice and a man's strange bearded face bending over her mother's as she entered the room unnoticed. Bertha looked and wondered and gave a cry as the stranger leaned nearer and pressed his lips to her mother's forehead. He turned and held out his arms to her. "Bertha my little girl," he said, and she knew it was her father come back; she did not know or care how just then.

But when he could get her to listen he told them how his boat had been carried in the storm they thought had drowned him, as it had others, a great way off and his efforts to battle against tides, waves and winds were fruitless. The rain too kept him from seeing any distance and when he was able to make progress, taking the direction the boat headed he rowed still further away and was, in time, picked up by a sailing vessel a great way from home, and landed at a distant port sick and weak. As soon as he recovered sufficiently to leave, he worked his way steadily for home.

When he reached the cottage at last, and everything was so hushed and quiet, his heart failed him. He entered and found his wife sleeping. She opened her eyes as he bent over her, and knew at once that she had need to be very thankful and happy. "I dreamed that a queer little creature said you were coming to me again well and hearty, John," Bertha's mother said.

"That was my own little fairy," the child cried out and told her story of the fish she had caught and her wonderful experience.

"So you have been dreaming too," her father said, smiling and pinching her flushed cheek. "Little business women ought not to slumber over their work." But Bertha looked very serious and never quite got over the thought that she must have dreamed with her eyes wide open. For what else had become of her last tempting bait, and had not her little fairy said truly that she would be rewarded? Bertha learned that good actions have their own sure reward.

DUPLICATE WEDDING GIFTS.—"Six butter knives! four salad spoons! nine cruet stands! three pairs of sugar tongs! and eight water pitchers! Was ever a girl so unfortunate?" exclaimed a perplexed country bride the other day, as she sorted out her wedding gifts on returning from her bridal tour.

"Why could they not have consulted together a little and have avoided all these duplicates? Anyway we shall never want for butter knives, salad spoons, cruet stands, sugar tongs or water pitchers for the rest of our natural lives."

Now if this young bride had been a city girl, she would not have mourned so much over the ordinary incident. She would simply have written a short note to one or two or three well-known dealers in the city, and on the following day a neat cab would stop at her door and a well-dressed woman would call on her.

Before the caller departed she would have fixed with the bride upon a cash price for all her duplicate gifts, or would have agreed to exchange them for more useful articles of household furniture.

So common has this way of doing things become that many people now send with their gifts a note saying that if they are duplicates they may be so dealt with.

MISTRESS AND MAID.—In England it is the law that when a person hires a domestic servant, unless it is otherwise agreed, the hiring is for a year, and if the employer wishes to discharge the servant before the time has expired, he must give her a month's notice or a month's pay. So the servant must give a month's notice if she wishes to leave.

There is no such law in this country. While it is very frequent for the mistress to expect a week's notice from her servant before she leaves her place, and for the servant to expect a similar notice or a week's pay before discharge, such notice or pay is not required by law.

In the absence of any agreement between the parties, the mistress has a right to discharge her servant at any time, with or without good cause, and the servant has a right to leave at any time she takes a notion to do so.

The fact that a girl is hired at a certain price per week does not require her to work the week out. Such a hiring only fixes the rate of wages and not the time of service.

THE SEXES.—To men belong the rough things of life, the stronger virtues, and naturally therefore the more selfish natures; to woman are confided all the sweet and modest, the devoted and unselfish qualities which make them so lovely in themselves, while they leave men great and render them both strong and blessed.

On men are showered the hard knocks, the cuts and bruises, which women have to heal; and the division is just, and for the most part works well and kindly. But, of all the working qualities by which life runs easily, especially in the home, patience in women is the most valuable.

THERE is no power of love so hard to get and keep as a kind voice. A kind hand is deaf and dumb. It may be rough in flesh and blood and yet do the work of a soft heart, and do it with a soft touch.

But there is not one thing that love so much needs as a sweet voice to tell what it means and feels, and it is hard to get and keep it in the right tone. One must be on the watch night and day, at work, at play, to get and keep a voice that shall speak at all times the thought of a kind heart. A kind voice is a lark's song to the hearth and home. It is to the heart what light is to the eye.

THERE are times in every household when things look a little dark—times of sickness, times when everybody seems tired, or a little out of humor, or perhaps even cross—and those are the times when sweetness, gentleness, kindness, and a little self-sacrifice are like beams of sunshine making everything bright, pleasant and comfortable again.

THIS life will not admit of equality; but surely that man who thinks he derives consequence and respect from keeping others at a distance is as base-minded as the coward who shuns the enemy from the fear of an attack.

Contest not a point merely because you are in the right and another in the wrong. Out of such contests spring dissensions and enmity.

MINISTER: "Well, Bobby, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

Bobby, suffering from parental discipline: "An orphan."

DR. BULL'S Cough Syrup is a certain and safe remedy for colds, coughs, etc. Only 25 cents.

Don't rub yourself with turpentine, but use Salvation Oil for your rheumatism. 25 cents.

CHRISTMAS IS HERE!

What a pleasure a year's subscription to "THE POST" would bring to one of your friends near at hand or at a distance!

Humorous.

A SEASONABLE COMPARISON.

Spring has its damp, producing cramp,
Then Summer suns with heat exhaust us,
Next Autumn dew brings on snow
The pains that Spring's already cost us

But worse than twinges Spring excites,
Than all the ills of Summer grills,
Than falling dew of Autumn nights,
'S the "falling due" of Christmas bills!

—U. S. NOTE.

Never on time—Sales for cash.

"The good die young" applies most emphatically to chickens.

Which side of a horse invariably has the most hair on?—The outside.

The man who owns a marble quarry may be said to have hard luck.

Know thyself. If you can't get the requisite information, run for office.

What kind of sweetmeats were most prevalent in Noah's ark?—Preserved pairs.

Editor to persistent writer: "Now, if you'll promise me on your honor never to send me anything more of yours I'll print this poem."

"It is really very odd, my dear," said an old lady, one very hot day to a friend. "I can't bear the heat in summer, and in winter I love it."

The good friend. "So, good bye, dear old fellow, and if ever you want $50 come to me and we'll go together and find some one who will lend it to us."

"How is your furnace?" "First-rate. We manage to get it warm every day, but it is a little selfish about letting any of the heat get away from it."

Very pretty. What is the difference between the old year and a sprig of holly?—The one's Christmas leaves and berries, the other leaves and buries Christmas.

Grandma: "I would like to know if that slip I set out four weeks ago has rooted." Alice: "No, grandma, it hasn't got a root. I've pulled it up every day and looked."

First German student, fiercely: "I challenge you to a duel, sir! Choose your weapons!" Second student, after a moment's reflection: "Boxing gloves at one hundred yards."

Everything is lovely, and—. Mr. Kanoodle: "And now wouldn't you like me for a Christmas present?" Miss Alert: "Certainly, if you'll hang yourself on the Christmas tree."

In a Bowery restaurant. Customer: "This 'ere vegetable soup. I ordered chicken." Waiter, examining the soup: "Dat's so, sir; my mistake. I t'ought dem celery tops was feathers."

Negro porter: "It's 9 o'clock, boss," Traveler: "What! Nine o'clock already? Then I must get up. Why didn't you tell me sooner that it was 9 o'clock? You might have let me know an hour ago."

Man enters newspaper office. Editor looks up in alarm. "My dear sir," said the visitor, "I have a bench warrant for your arrest." Editor: "Thank God, it is no worse. I thought you had a poem."

Bridget has a kitchen full of company. Mistress, from the head of the stairs: "Bridget!" Bridget: "Yis, ma'am." Mistress: "It's 10 o'clock," Bridget: "T'ank ye, ma'am; an' will ye be so kind as to till me when it's 12?"

"Papa," said a boy much given to reading, "I have often seen the phrase, 'all right thinking people,' in the papers. What kind of people are right-thinking people?" "They are the sort of people," said the father, "who think as we do."

A suite of rooms was advertised at a fashionable summer resort as having among its attractions "a splendid view over a fine garden, adorned with numerous sculptures." It was found, on applying at the address, that the garden adorned with sculpture was a cemetery.

A little 4-year-old child who was saying her prayers at her mother's knee, concluded as usual: "Bless papa, mamma, grandpapa and grandmamma, uncles, aunts," etc., and then said: "Oh, mamma, dear, I do wish these people would pray for themselves, for I am so tired of praying for them!"

Lady, to tramp: "Are you going off? You promised before I gave you your dinner that you would saw some wood." Tramp, from Boston: "Yes, madam, but you err in assuming that the words necessarily apply to your wood. The remark has reference to the woodpile of another lady further up the road. Good day."

A certain quiet lady whose absence of mind is proverbial, happening to meet in society a young widow who had lately lost her husband, condoled with her sympathetically on her bereavement: then after a pause, during which she lapsed into her accustomed forgetfulness, she enquired, to the stupefaction of the mourner: "Was he the only one you had?"

Together they were looking over the paper. "Oh my, how funny!" said she. "What is it?" he asked. "Why, here's an advertisement that says, 'No reasonable offer refused.'" "What's so odd about that?" "Nothing, nothing," she replied, trying to blush; "only those are exactly my sentiments." If that young man hadn't taken the hint and proposed then and there she would have hated him

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THE ONLY PAIN REMEDY

That instantly stops the most excruciating pains, allays Inflammation and cures Congestion, whether of the Lungs, Stomach, Bowels, or other glands or organs, by one application.

INTERNALLY, a half to a teaspoonful in half a tumbler of water will in a few minutes cure Cramps, Spasms, Sour Stomach, Nausea, Vomiting, Heartburn, Nervousness, Sleeplessness, Sick Headache, Diarrhœa, Colic, Flatulency and all internal pains.

MALARIA IN ALL ITS FORMS,

FEVER AND AGUE,

Radway's Ready Relief

Not only cures the patient seized with malaria, but if people exposed to it in chill and fever districts will every morning on getting out of bed take twenty or thirty drops of the READY RELIEF in a glass of water and drink it, and eat, say a cracker, they will escape attacks.

There is not a remedial agent in the world that will cure fever and ague and all other malarious, bilious and other fevers, aided by RADWAY'S PILLS, so quickly as RADWAY'S READY RELIEF.

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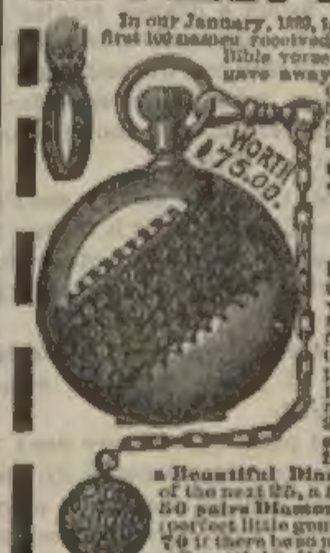

In our January, 1889, issue we published the first 100 names received in reply to our last Bible verse contest, in which we gave away $100 in cash, a Solid Gold Watch, 25 Solid Silver Watches, and 71 Solid Gold and Genuine Diamond Rings.

$661 MORE TO BE GIVEN AWAY, Feb'y 1st, 1890.

We will give to the **First 150 PERSONS** telling us where the word WIFE is first found in the Bible before Feb. 1st, 1890, the following valuable prizes: To the 1st person giving the correct answer, $100; 2d, $75; 3d, $50; 4th, a Solid Gold Hunting Case Watch; 5th, a Beautiful Diamond Ring; to each of the next 25, a Solid Silver Watch, 50 pairs Diamond Screw Ear Rings (perfect little gems); to each of the next 70 if there be so many correct answers, a Beautiful Solid Gold Ring set with genuine Diamonds. With your answer send 25c. to help cover expense of this advt, postage, &c., and we will send you our Illustrated 16 page Monthly for 4 months and our new Illustrated Catalogue of Watches, Diamonds, &c. Our 13d Monthly of March issue will announce the results of the contest, with names and addresses of the winners. This offer is made solely to introduce our publications into new homes. We, as publishers, are thoroughly known. "Honesty and Square Dealing" is our motto. Our MONTHLY was established in 1877. Give full name and address. (Stamps taken.) Address

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These watches must be sold, and as an inducement for you to order quickly, we will send to each of the first one hundred, ordering from this advertisement, a solid, 14K **Gold Watch** worth $60, prepaid $3.50 is sent with the order. Elegant, $61.19 **SOLID GOLD CHAINS** of the latest patterns, for $1.50, $2.00, $3.00, and up. **ORDER AT ONCE,** before the 100 of the first and get a solid gold watch for $3.50. All watches are stem-winding, elegantly finished, and guaranteed perfectly satisfactory in every way. Send money by registered letter or P. O order at our risk. Watches and chains sent safely by registered mail to any address, provided 15 cents extra is sent to pay postage.

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Latest Fashion Phases.

Although the other interests surrounding Christmas make fashion for the time a secondary consideration, much is still going on in that line.

The new bonnets are small in size and oblong in shape; there is no longer the usual division of parts into crown and brim, the top is covered with plain or draped material and a band of folds round the edge, deeper in the centre than at the sides, forms the brim.

Velvet is again the favorite material for bonnets, and is either arranged in fluted pleats from the back to the front over the crown, or else the centre of the crown is flat and embroidered with gold, with folds of velvet rising above it all round, except just at the back.

In many good models a little lace or very fine guipure embroidery is laid on flat round the crown, above the brim, which is sometimes raised a little in front and crossed by folds of velvet laid the other way, or ornamented with a bouillonne or bow.

Very little trimming is used, a small plume of feathers, or bow of narrow ribbon velvet matching the strings, which are fastened on at the back, is all-sufficient. Many colors are worn, but brown velvet with cream ribbon velvet trimmings, and dark-green velvet with light-green or black trimmings, especially jet, are the most fashionable colors.

Bonnets of sealskin, in similar small, oblong shapes, but without folds, and trimmed with narrow cream-colored ribbon velvet, will be much worn, especially with sealskin jackets and mantles.

Hats are made with immensely wide brims, chiefly in brown felt and brown velvet, and are trimmed with magnificent plumes of shaded feathers.

Some of these felt hats have the brim braided on the outside with gold braid sewn on edgeways, and lined with velvet; the braiding is on the front and side part of the brim only, and a design to correspond is worked on the top of the crown; a broad fold of velvet encircles the crown, and ends on one side of the front under a bow or plume of feathertips.

The velvet hats, very handsome in green as well as in brown, have the brim covered with plain stretched velvet; the material on the crown is full, gathered in three or four close rows where it joins the brim, the gauging forming a kind of band round the crown; the fulness is arranged in fluted pleats drawn to one side of the crown, and fastened there under a plume of feathers.

The green velvet hats are, like the bonnets, much trimmed with jet; a band of jet insertion is let into the brim, and another band is put round the crown; the plume of feathers is either black or green.

For useful cloaks long shapes are generally preferred to all others; these are either in plain redingote style, fastened down the centre or diagonally, or else they take the form of mantles; some type of more or less semi-fitting redingote is universal, with a long, loose oversleeve, joined on under the arm, as well as at the shoulder, but open all the way down in front.

Colored broche and fancy cloths are much used for these, with collars, revers, and sleeve trimmings of beaver, otter, or sealskin.

A very handsome model in broche cloth is fastened from the right shoulder to the left side of the waist under a revers of beaver, and secured here with a passementerie clasp, the opening of the skirt slants back again towards the right under a similar revers, and the coat sleeves and long, hanging Juive sleeves are both trimmed with the fur.

More costly models are made of black velvet plush; one of these, very simple and elegant, is a perfectly-fitting redingote, with small Zouave jacket fronts, clinging closely to the figure, of black astrakan; the collar is of similar fur, and the rather full sleeves are moderately raised at the shoulder, and drawn into wide, open cuffs of astrakan, having in front the appearance of bell sleeves, but without the inconvenience generally attached to these sleeves, of being exceedingly cold.

Bell sleeves are, however, very fashionable; some are only slightly open, but the openings are of all lengths, in some cases extending to the edge of the cloak.

Colored plush mantles are favorite cloaks for dressy occasions; these are in small manteletshapes embroidered with silk in the same color or in black, and edged with chenille fringe to match.

The embroidery closely resembles guipure passementerie, but is entirely worked by hand, and the effect of delicate shades of gray, dull-blue, gray-green, and similar tints is very lovely.

The long Italian or Juive hanging sleeve is so much worn that variations on it are welcome. To illustrate, one of these variations is the mantle with half-shawl points falling in easy, natural folds from the shoulder over the coat sleeves underneath.

Sealskin jackets and mantles are made in many shapes; a fashionable type is a mantilla of sealskin, short at the back, cut with long, square ends in front, with pelerine sleeves and collar of otter or beaver; the sleeves reach to the elbow only, and are open in front, rendering a warm dress underneath very necessary.

Plush is so far from being demode that, although employed in new ways, it is one of the most fashionable materials of the season.

It is used for mantles, as already mentioned, and for charming little corsages for indoor wear; these consist of a short, open jacket over a crossed pleated waistcoat of the same material, ending at the waist in a little pointed band.

These bodices are charming in light, delicate colors for evening and theatre wear, with skirts of silk, surah, voile, or other light fabrics.

Plush is also used in wide bias bands as a trimming for the skirts of dresses made of plain woollen fabrics; the plush is generally in the same color as the dress material, and the corsage is ornamented with revers, collar, cuffs, and waistcoat or plastron to correspond.

Costumes of plain colored woollen fabrics are also trimmed with black passementerie, or with black moire silk. The skirt is ornamented with a straight band of the passementerie or silk round the skirt, or else it is draped a little in front, and has a black passementerie panel on one side.

When moire silk is employed, a pretty fashion is to make the corsage with short, open jacket fronts of the silk, the underbodice and the back of the jacket being of the colored woollen; the full sleeves are of woollen, with wristbands of moire silk, and the folded sash, crossing the underbodice at the waist, is also of silk.

Bodices trimmed with passementerie are usually draped diagonally from one shoulder, the other side being plain, and striped with rows of passementerie in straight or diagonal lines.

The sleeves and collar are trimmed to match; full sleeves are more fashionable than coat sleeves, but, whether full or tight, they are much raised at the shoulder, or ornamented at this part with puff or draperies.

Plaids and tartans are universal; the patterns are large and the colors bright as a rule, but many of these stylish fabrics are in sober colors, with the narrow crossing lines that form the pattern in brighter tints, red, yellow, blue, green, etc., on a brown, russet, or very dark green or blue ground.

These materials are sometimes made up alone as draped skirts, but they are more often combined with plain woollen to correspond.

The plain material is used for the underskirt, with a wide bias band of plaid near the edge; the plaid is employed for the over-skirt, and forms a draped tablier in front, with pleats round one side and the back; on the other side is a draped panel of the plaid, distinct from the draped front and pleated back breath, and showing the under-skirt on either side of it.

In some models the plain skirt is seen in front, the tablier of plaid over it falling in plain fold on one side, while the other side is caught up with a few pleats near the waist.

The bodices are of the plaid material, with plastrons of plain woollen either pleated or gathered.

Plaid silks and plaid velvets are used in the same way for more expensive dresses; these fabrics are also in brighter colors than the woollens, and more like Scottish tartans in appearance.

Odds and Ends

CHRISTMAS COOKERY.

Plum Pudding.—Two pounds of raisins stoned and chopped a little, two pounds of currants, two pounds of suet, one pound of moist sugar, four or five large spoonfuls of flour, the yolks of eight eggs and the whites of five, two pounds of breadcrumbs, a little lemon peel, a little candied peel and spice, two ounces of sweet almonds pounded well, two glasses of brandy. Boil for eight hours.

Mincemeat.—One pound and a half of beef suet, one pound and a half of apples, one pound and a half of raisins, one pound and a half of currants, one pound and a half of moist sugar, one-fourth of a pound of candied peel, half a tumblerful each of sherry and pale brandy, the juice and grated rind of two lemons; one pinch of salt, powdered mace, nutmeg, and cinnamon to taste. Chop the dry ingredients all rather fine, and when well mixed pour on the sherry and brandy.

Escalloped Turkey.—Moisten breadcrumbs with a little milk; butter a pan and put in it a layer of crumbs, then a layer of chopped (not very fine) cold turkey seasoned with salt and pepper, then a layer of crumbs, and so on until the pan is full. If any gravy or dressing has been left, add it. Make a thickening of one or two eggs, half a cup of milk, and quarter of a cup of butter and breadcrumbs; season and spread it over the top; cover with a pan, bake half an hour, and then let it brown.

Christmas Tart.—Cut out of some good puff crust, rolled to the thickness of a quarter of inch, two rounds about the size of a breakfast plate. Place one of these upon an enamelled baking-tin, spread it equally with a thick layer of very nice mincemeat, of which the flavor may be heightened with a small glass of citronelle or some other liquor. Lay the second round of pastry upon this, and bake to a very delicate brown in a moderate oven. Cut out, also in puff crust, sufficient crescent-shaped ornaments to edge the tart, but bake them separately, and do not allow them to take any color. They should be rather thick and of an equal thickness. When baked, set them and the tart aside until quite cold. For the sugar glaze, wet the bottom of an enamelled saucepan with cold water, and put into it one pound of crushed loaf sugar, three ounces of fresh butter, and a few drops of essence of cinnamon. Let these melt gradually over a gentle heat, and stir until the syrup looks clear. Drop a little of it into a cup of cold water, and if it will break crisply it is done. Cover your tart with this, and before the glaze is quite set arrange round the edge of it the pastry crescents with their convex sides outwards; and sprinkle the glaze thickly with white sugar-grains in imitation of snow.

Turkey Patties.—Mince some of the white part, and fill the patties with grated lemon, nutmeg, salt, a very little white pepper, cream, and a small bit of butter warmed.

Cream Pudding.—Boil a quart of cream with a blade of mace, three cloves, and half a nutmeg, grated, and let it stand to cool. Beat eight eggs, but only three whites; strain and mix them with a spoonful of the finest flour, a quarter of a pound of almonds, blanched, and beaten fine with spoonful of orange or rose-water. Mix these by degrees in the cream, and stir all well together. Take a thick cloth, wet and flour it well; pour in the mixture, tie it close, and plunge it into boiling water. Keep it boiling half an hour very fast. When done, turn it carefully on a dish, strew fine sugar upon it, and serve pudding sauce round.

Furmety.—This is a famous Christmas dish. It is a sort of porridge, and may be drank both at night and morning. The principal ingredient is wheat gradually boiled till it assumes the appearance of jelly. This is a work of time, for it must be soaked and swelled by keeping it over a slow fire for many hours. Then to a quart of this prepared wheat must be added two quarts of new milk, and a quarter of a pound of currants or raisins, well-washed, and picked, and stoned. Stir together and boil. Beat up the yolks of four eggs and a little nutmeg, with two tablespoonfuls more milk; add these to the other ingredients; stir well together; sweeten to your taste; simmer, but do not boil, or the eggs will curdle. When done, pour into a tureen and send to table.

Christmas Plum Pudding.—Put into a bowl a cupful of flour, ditto breadcrumbs grated, ditto chopped beef suet, ditto raisins picked and stoned, ditto currants, some sugar, some cut candied peel, a little mixed spice to flavor, a little salt, and a good grate of ginger; beat four eggs, make a hole in your ingredients to the bottom of the wooden bowl, stir in the eggs smoothly, beat well, then add milk enough to make it into a consistency sufficiently to allow of the pudding spoon standing upright, which is the criterion of the quantity of milk to be used; add a wine-glass of brandy; beat for half an hour; butter your mould and pour in the pudding; tie up the mould in a cloth, and boil three hours and a half.

One pint of boiling water will dissolve about four pounds and a half of alum, but the same quantity of ice-cold water will not dissolve more than four ounces of alum. This is a remarkable illustration of the effects which may be produced by a comparatively small change of temperature.

Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.

Confidential Correspondents.

BELL.—The probability is that the depth of the sea is equal to the heights of the mountains on the earth's surface.

SHERMAN.—In the United States it is common usage to say railroad depot; in England they say railway station.

BETSY J.—No man can have a particle of respect or love for any girl if he shrinks from introducing her to his friends.

REWARD.—Æsop was a Phrygian philosopher, who, though originally a slave, procured his liberty by his witty fables.

SUE.—The pianoforte is more difficult, we should say, to learn than the cornet, but not so difficult as the violin, which is considered the most difficult of musical instruments. 3. According to ability.

ROBINSON.—The habit of licking and biting the lips is a very offensive and unpleasant one, and calculated to spoil the shape of the mouth. All bad habits can be easily cured by a little exercise of will.

HOPEFUL.—You have acted very foolishly, and you may be thankful that the gentleman behaved as he did; many men would have shown the letters, and made you the subject of vulgar jesting and annoyance. Let it be a lesson to you never to act in such a way again.

FLORIS C.—The present must depend on the gentleman's taste and habits. If he is a smoker a pipe or tobacco pouch would be suitable; if not there are many things: a pocket-book or a nice silk handkerchief is always acceptable. You must be guided by circumstances how to give it.

RENO.—"Mizpah" means a watch-tower. The significance of the word you will find in the thirty-first chapter of Genesis, where Jacob and Laban, at parting, set up a heap of stones as a monument and called it Galeed, "and Mizpah: for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another."

EMMA.—For warts the application of a strong acid or caustic to the surface of the growth to destroy it is all that is required. Acetic acid is the one most used. It should be dropped on every day till the wart screws and falls off. Care should be taken of the surrounding skin. Failing that, carbolic or hydrochloric may be tried.

FRECKLES.—We have several times given a receipt for the removal of freckles: here is another: One ounce of lemon juice, a quarter of a drachm of powdered borax, and half a drachm of sugar. Mix and let them stand in a bottle for a few days until ready for use: then rub on the hands and face occasionally. 2. Take plenty of exercise.

ST. LOUIS.—The naming of vessels of the Navy is regulated by law. Vessels of the first class are required to be named after States, those of the second after rivers, those of the third after principal cities and towns, and those of the fourth as the President may direct. The law is not always observed as closely as it ought to be, but in the main it governs the naval nomenclature.

TEN YEARS.—Santa Claus is a Dutch abbreviation for St. Nicholas, who is the patron saint of boys. He died in the year 326, and the young were taught to revere him, and to believe that on Christmas Eve he brought presents to children. A legend says that he brought three murdered boys to life. This Santa Klaus, called Kris Kringle or Criss Cringle, is dressed in a fur cap, a long coat, and a huge bag full of presents. He is (as is our Old Christmas) a personification of good-will and jollity. The little Germans sing out: "Come, oh Christ-child, make me pious and good, that I may come to you in Heaven."

IVY-GREEN.—It is difficult to say which has the greater claims to precedence, the holly or the ivy. The preference, however, may be given to the former, which is invariably present in all Yuletide decorations. Indeed, holly for decoration at Christmas is of great antiquity, and is regarded as the survival of the usages of the Roman Saturnalia, or of an old Teutonic practice of hanging the interior of dwellings with evergreens, as a refuge for sylvan spirits from the inclemency of the weather. The common holly, or hulver, was known to the Anglo-Saxons as holen or holegn and in mediæval England was known as holyn or holin.

SCIENTIA.—The name of the instrument to which you allude is the "phonograph." The remarks of a person who has spoken into it are faithfully reproduced as to tone, pitch, and time. The impressions received in the phonograph are conveyed to a cylinder of wax, and thus a permanent record may be kept of what has been said. When it is desired to reproduce the voice, the wax cylinder is placed in the phonograph, and made to revolve at a certain rate; the marks on the wax set a needle in motion, which conveys its movement to a membrane which in its vibration causes the vocal sounds. A similar but more portable, and easily adaptable instrument to the phonograph is called the graphophone.

H. C. C.—Do you not know that the world is a sphere, and revolves on its own axis as well as round the sun. It is very much like an orange; that is to say, not a perfectly round figure, but somewhat flattened at the poles. The writer was quite right in saying that if any one started off in a straight line in any direction, he could go on for ever. You draw a straight line round an orange; if you could place a fly on it, and make it travel on and over your line, you would find that it would never come to an end, but return again and again to the spot whence it started. Our space is too limited to give numerous examples (which we might easily do) to prove that the world is nearly round. We should advise you to obtain some elementary work on the use of the globes, in which you will doubtless find sufficient explanation for your purpose. No one knows the position of heaven or hell. It is enough for us to know that there will be a place of reward for the good, and of punishment for the bad. The remarks of the writer had no reference to spiritualism; he was merely stating facts, physical facts! and the fact that God hears prayers instantly that are offered up on earth, proves, not that space is limited, but that God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. Why, he knows the thoughts of our hearts before our lips utter a word! You must remember that God is a spirit, and not to be measured by our finite conceptions, not to be properly realized by our weak thoughts while we are still in the body; only to be known when we shall have "shuffled off this mortal coil," shall bow before His throne, and see Him as He is.